MONTHLY REVIEW

VOL. 50
9

FEBRUARY 1999 $3.00/£2.00

AN INDEPENDENT SOCIALIST MAGAZINE

Progressive Globalism: Challenging the Audacity of Capital
William K. Tabb

Reflections on the Politics of Culture
Michael Parenti

A Second Wave of National Liberation?
Fawzy Mansour

The U.S. Left and Media Politics
Robert W. McChesney

Social Change and Human Nature
Will Miller

Books:

Fusing Red and Green
Paul Burkett

1949-1999 50 YEARS

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MONTHLY REVIEW VOLUME 50 NUMBER 9 FEBRUARY 1999

Editors:
Paul M. Sweezy
Harry Magdoff
Ellen Meiksins Wood
Leo Huberman (1903-1968)
W.H. Locke Anderson
Associate Editor
Vicki Larson
Assistant Editor
Martin Paddio
Circulation Manager

REVIEW OF THE MONTH:
PROGRESSIVE GLOBALISM:
CHALLENGING THE AUDACITY OF CAPITAL
by William K. Tabb 1

REFLECTIONS ON THE POLITICS OF CULTURE
by Michael Parenti 11

A SECOND WAVE OF NATIONAL LIBERATION?
by Fawzy Mansour 19

THE U.S. LEFT AND MEDIA POLITICS
by Robert W. McChesney 32

SOCIAL CHANGE AND HUMAN NATURE
by Will Miller 42

BOOKS

Fusing Red and Green
by Paul Burkett 47

MONTHLY REVIEW (ISSN 0027 0520) is a publication of Monthly Review Foundation, a non-profit institution. It is published monthly except July and August, when bimonthly, and copyright © 1998, by Monthly Review. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send all address changes (Form 3579) to Monthly Review Foundation, 122 West 27th Street, New York, NY 10001. EDITORIAL AND BUSINESS: 122 West 27th Street, New York, NY 10001. Telephone: (212) 691-2555. Fax: (212) 727-3676 Email: mreview@igc.apc.org. Unsolicited manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. *MR* is indexed in the PAIS Bulletin, Historical Abstracts, America: History and Life, Political Science Abstracts, and the Alternative Press Index, P.O. Box 7729, Baltimore, MD 21218, tel.: (301) 243-2471. NEWSSTAND DISTRIBUTION: B.De Boer, Inc., 113 E. Centre Street, Nutley, NJ 07110; Armadillo & Co., 5795 W. Washington Boulevard, Culver City, CA 90232; Small Changes, 3443 Twelfth Avenue West, Seattle, WA 98119; Central Books, 99 Wallis Road, London, E9 5LN, England. SUBSCRIPTION PRICE: U.S.: One year $29, students and senior citizens $24; Foreign $37; students and senior citizens $28. Libraries and Institutions: U.S. $48; Foreign $48. Additional Postage: First Class (U.S. $15); Airmail: Foreign and Canada $20.

NOTES FROM THE EDITORS

Back in December, while the January issue was going to press, the United States and Britain were bombing Iraq, and Congress was impeaching Bill Clinton. Our publication schedule spares us the temptation to say the first thing that comes into our heads when a major news story breaks. But sober reflection hasn't changed our first reaction: if Clinton were being impeached for bombing Iraq, it wouldn't be hard to support his removal from office—though if all U.S. presidents were fired for their imperialist adventures, impeachment would now be as normal and regular a political event as election.

But of course there isn't, and never was, the remotest chance of impeachment for actions that are the bread and butter of U.S. foreign policy. Clinton's harshest critics on the right are likely, in normal circumstances, to attack him for being too soft on Saddam Hussein ("too little

(Continued on inside back cover)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PROGRESSIVE GLOBALISM: CHALLENGING THE AUDACITY OF CAPITAL

WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY
FEB 0 5 1999
DUNBAR LIBRARY

by WILLIAM K. TABB

I will address some aspects of globalization in our time and what they mean for working people. I will start with some general definitions and suggest that the most significant features of what is called globalization have always been part of capitalist development, even if the forms are different in different periods (including our own). I will then discuss the arrogance of capital as it tries to remake our world in its preferred image. In this regard, I will contrast U.S. initiatives in the area of labor standards with worker demands for labor rights. I will then consider the institutions of an internationalized capitalist regime, which seeks to impose itself using vehicles such as the International Monetary Fund and the proposed Multilateral Agreement on Investment. Finally, I will talk about resistance.

Globalization refers to the process of reducing barriers between countries and encouraging closer economic, political, and social interaction. Globalization could vastly increase the ability of people everywhere to improve their living standards by sharing knowledge and the fruits of human labor across those barriers. This, of course, does not happen. The point, and it is one too easily glided over and too often ignored, is that, as Richard Walker has written, "Accumula-

---

William K. Tabb is professor of Economics at Queens College and of Political Science at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. His book, *Reconstructing Political Economy: The Great Divide in Economic Thought*, will be published by Routledge in late Spring of 1999. This talk was prepared for the November 20, 1998 Monthly Labor Leadership Breakfast, sponsored by the Queens College Labor Studies Center. It was then revised for the Seminar on Labor and Popular Struggles in the Global Political Economy at the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University on February 15, 1999, and for publication here.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tion is the main driving force of the world economy, along with its correlates, capital-capital competition and capital-labor exploitation. This is why it makes sense to speak of 'the capitalist system' rather than 'the global market.' The greatest economic myth of all is that the market has as its principal purpose the service of human needs rather than the aggrandizement of capitalists and their corporations."

So when we hear that "Nothing can be done, the global market is just too powerful, and governments are helpless," it is important to ask whose government we are talking about. The state in a capitalist society is the capitalist state. The government is not a neutral arbitrator with weak powers against market forces, but a structural part of the capitalist system in which we live. Globalization is not a steamroller against which the U.S. government is helpless; the state is an active participant in the structuring of globalization. If the United States has lost power to the international market, the loss has been largely self-inflicted. As British political scientist Susan Strange argues, "In order to make the rest of the world safe and welcoming to American capitalism, successive U.S. governments have broken down barriers to foreign investment and promoted capital mobility." These changes may be increasing the asymmetries of power between states to the advantage of the more market-oriented. Opting out of the world market economy is no longer an option. That, as Strange argues, "is what dependency means today." The state is forced to become, as the Canadian theorist Robert Cox writes, "a transmission belt from the global to the national economy, where hithertofore it had acted as the bulwark defending the domestic welfare from external disturbances." Since opting out is not possible, the questions are about what kind of relationship state formations will have to global capital, and how they will use the power they have, individually and collectively, to shape their own and global institutions. The present is threatened by the strength of hyper-liberal globalization. The assertion of social control and pursuance of a leveling-up and, in sum, a more balanced and positive development, could change the nature of the globalization process. Surely it is our task to push things in that direction as much as we can. The idea that this is impossible, the sense of inevitability, is an ideological construct and the product of political forces acting through powerful mechanisms in the realms of government and media.

Globalization is not simply a technologically driven force. The spin put on globalization and the politics of the period combine to misrepresent much of what has happened and why it has been able to take place. For example, the relationship between globalization and jobs and income in the United States is not a simple one. Most U.S. trade is with countries that pay higher wages than we do. Traditionally imports from low-wage countries have been in products we

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cannot produce here, easily or at all—bananas, coffee, bauxite. The recent rise of the East Asian manufacturing exporters and NAFTA raise questions about whether this is changing. Because of innovations in transportation and communication, many industrial goods are being produced outside the core. As a result, there has been much talk about unfair competition and the need to protect workers' rights. I would like to discuss some aspects of the way these issues are being presented.

Capital's Reformism

Whatever else Soviet communism was or was not, it supported national liberation struggles and could protect Marxist governments from the full force of American imperialism (as in the case of Cuba and others). With the end of the Cold War and the demise of the Soviet Union, transnational capital has revised its state theory and practice. In the new climate, the brutal dictatorships that characterized the free world regimes of the periphery, with their naked repression, mass murders, torture, and extortionist attitudes toward business activity within their territories, are no longer required. They are costly, inefficient from a business point of view, and tend to crystallize mass opposition. Such opposition can be repressed only at significant cost and at the risk of promoting mass movements which adopt anticapitalist ideologies, because repression and foreign capitalist control are widely understood as linked. Better to have democratic governments, managed by local elites who are committed to transnational capital's globalist vision. In this way, well-meaning, democratically elected governments enforce IMF austerity, arguing that there is no alternative to market-oriented globalism. Once the threat of revolution recedes, a local business class is a better partner for transnational capital than a rent-seeking military regime.

Interestingly, the major industrial countries, and especially the United States, want to write international labor standards into the World Trade Organization's mandate. They would include rights already recognized by the International Labor Organization: freedom of association, the right to organize and bargain collectively, non-discrimination, minimum age requirements, and a ban on compulsory labor. There are proposals in Congress and the European Parliament to restrict imports which do not meet stipulated labor standards. Such an approach is part of a larger agenda that stresses democracy and elections and is critical of the old-style dictatorial regimes which the United States did so much to encourage in the Cold War years.

The classical liberalism of Bill Clinton and Tony Blair is ready to intervene and tell third-world governments what is good for their people: free trade, free competition, open economies which do not

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

discriminate among market participants, and free elections (in which the power of money holds sway). This is not to say that, in countries where popular movements threaten the power of elites favored by the imperial powers, force is not a necessary remedy. Rather, formal freedom with strong markets is favored over rule by officials who seek to shake down not only their own businessmen but foreign capitalists as well. They are no longer a necessary evil in a period where few, if any, local elites would prefer to opt out rather than compete to attract foreign investment.

So we can advocate for better labor standards and formal democracy, provided that elections are consistently won by friends of free market policies. By breaking the connection between non-democratic governance and economic repression, such democratization, with its formally free elections won by bourgeois and free market parties, changes the political balance and makes it harder for popular movements to organize against neoliberalism. Granting even abstract and formal labor rights, and ending autocratic and military rule, are important steps forward and make a big difference in the lives of working people. But the condition of this development is the restriction on working-class power in the economic arena, just as the condition of regularly scheduled elections and freedom of speech is that control of the state remains in the hands of neoliberalism, however unpopular its policies may be.

Labor Standards/Labor Rights

To help us understand what is going on, consider the distinction between labor standards and labor rights. Labor standards are externally determined yardsticks which are used to exclude the products of particular countries from other markets. Labor *rights* are about the responsibilities of employers and governments to respect workers and their organizations, and above all, about the power of the working class to organize itself.

It is also important that the working class has the power to redefine the rules governing the relations between capital and labor. Labor standards are granted. Labor rights are won. Labor's friends are important contributors to the achievement of both, but the emphasis is different. Even where labor standards are formally accepted, terrible practices are left untouched in sectors where production is not for export but for domestic consumption, which in some economies is the largest sector. There are no international sanctions proposed to help these workers. They can only be helped by winning labor rights. Labor standards are typically enforced by governments or self-policing trade groups and not by independent union monitoring. External agencies focus on symbolic standards. What is crucial is

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the ability of the workers to organize themselves and strengthen their independent organizations.

The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights recognized the universal rights of people as workers as framed in the ILO conventions, which banned child labor and asserted the right of association and the right to organize. But the ILO depends on voluntary compliance. It has no enforcement powers. The World Trade Organization does. It could compel and enforce labor standards as it does intellectual property rights. But it chooses not to because ... well, because these issues fall within the jurisdiction of the ILO! It is useful to remember that the ILO was formed in 1919 to prevent the spread of Bolshevik influence among the workers of the world, especially those of Europe, where the appeal of the Revolution at that time threatened to become more than substantial.

The WTO Secretariat Report on Trade and Investment argues "that a lack of rule, policy and coherence [poses a] danger to security and stability, which are basic goals of trade and investment agreements." While such coherence extends to a very broad variety of investment-related policies, from trademark enforcement to protecting the rights of foreign producers in a host of specific ways, the protection of workers' property in their ability to determine the conditions under which they labor is not trade-related. This is not the business of the WTO, which could do something about it, but of the ILO, which has been able to accomplish very little since it was created, by capital, as a cooling-out device during the Bolshevik scare.

The advanced countries are already in compliance with the ILO labor standards. Some, most prominently the British and the Americans, have been most effectively (but of course legally) undercutting labor rights, however. In fact, labor standards can be a stick with which the advanced countries can threaten and discipline East Asian and other newly-industrializing economies. But the developing countries that strongly object to labor standards by no means do so because they are concerned with labor rights. They share with the advanced economies' governments the goal of maximizing capital accumulation, but for their own capitalists. Among the official voices of developing market economies, one will not find advocates of livable wages and better working conditions, or indeed any rights for workers.

The basic problem for workers in both the developed and the developing countries is not foreign competition but the power of capital. Jobs need protection because capital creates and maintains coercive pressure on labor, and uses state power and the so-called freedom of the marketplace to escape social control, to the maximum degree possible. Capital keeps workers competing as best it can and attempts to erode class consciousness and working-class power.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

If concern for the social conditions of workers were driving goverment policies, we would be seeing something very different from the subsidies that favor capital, tax write-offs for machinery, and favorable tax treatment for industry when plants are closed (but nothing for the stranded workers), and the reduction of already inadequate spending on job creation, health and education for working-class families. A socially conscious government would focus on the taxation and regulation of capital, not immigration and allegedly unfair labor advantages of other countries.

These remarks are not made to suggest that the struggle for labor standards cannot be an important way to place some limits on capital in industrializing countries, and to raise consciousness concerning the extent of exploitation and oppression, but to underline that the struggle must be for working-class power. This requires workers' rights achieved in struggle by workers themselves, with as much support as possible from other progressive movements, and not simply the adoption of standards rendered ineffectual by the absence of enforcement mechanisms.

Progressive forces recently pulled out of negotiations with producers over a code of conduct that would address problems in third-world sweatshops. They did so precisely because industry-dominated and carefully limited inspection was being crafted not as a tool for advancing labor rights, but as a public relations vehicle for large transnationals, embarrassed by unflattering publicity, who wished to escape more meaningful scrutiny. I shall return to this issue, but first it is necessary to underscore the following point.

We do not and cannot expect the needs of working people to be uppermost in the minds of governments that serve capital, and will continue to permit and encourage systematic violation of worker rights in the name of competitiveness. Trade unionists, perhaps more than others, grasp the distinction between the interests of the state and the interests of the exploited millions around the world. Additionally, the ILO now has a new director who seems committed to more activism, and there is some hope that perhaps the ILO can become a more powerful vehicle for the pursuance of working-class interests. But its structure —unlike the World Trade Organization, which has power to enforce the demands of transnational capital and excludes labor from decision-making— is tripartite. Capital is an equal partner along with labor and governments. Decision-making is consensual, and compliance is voluntary. The real action is elsewhere, in the same way that the United Nations General Assembly is allowed to debate while economic issues are decided in other fora, such as the World Bank and the IMF, where it is not one nation, one vote, but one dollar, one vote, and the United States alone has sufficient votes for veto power.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Globalization from the Top/Resistance from the Bottom

There is no great interest, on the part of those international organizations that have real power, to struggle for the emancipation of labor and protection of the environment. At the same time, some agencies of corporate globalism are very much involved in pursuing the emancipation of capital from popular control. The Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) was negotiated in secret for years and, earlier this year, *Business Week* called it "The Explosive Trade Deal You've Never Heard Of," noting that until Public Citizen Global Trade Watch put a draft of the agreement on the Web, few lawmakers in Washington had ever heard of it. Renato Ruggiero, the Director General of the WTO, describes the MAI proposal as the constitution for a single global economy. It takes the principles enshrined in the North American Free Trade Agreement and the World Trade Organization to a higher level, and prohibits governments from making new laws which interfere with the right of capital to free investment where and when it likes, and rolls back existing restrictions on capital. The rules also require a five year period before any country can withdraw from the agreement, and no protections and privileges for corporations can be undone for another fifteen years. Nations would lose control over their economies and could be sued for interfering with transnationals. Penalties would have to be paid if national policies caused the companies to forego profit.

Today the MAI is off the immediate agenda, not least because the left was able to expose its aims and act as part of a broader movement of opposition (with national capitals and cultural nationalists). But it is important to realize how many of its provisions are already enshrined in the World Trade Organization, and are being imposed in the proposed charter revision that would further the IMF's effort to transform nation-state level practices.

It is surely clear that capital is attempting to create an international regime with powers unaccountable to elected governments. This regime would obey only the rule of the marketplace, as defined by transnational capital and its bureaucratic allies, and be empowered by the political elites of states which, having attempted to carry out such policies, would dread facing re-election. By saying "It is out of our hands, and globalization is beyond what we can do anything about," they surrender sovereignty to capital. Only organized opposition by a working class aware of what is at stake can reverse these developments.

It will be a long and hard fight. But awareness of the real issues is spreading fairly rapidly. The high tide of neoliberalism has probably passed in the core advanced countries. The problem now is not Thatcher-Reagan attacks on the working class and its organizations.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The appeal of harsh anti-working-class governments has passed, as the cost of their policies has become widely experienced and understood. The Blair-Clinton approach is to feel worker's pain, to preach democracy, and to convince us that there is no choice but neo-liberalism with a smiley face. The problem is not that we are part of a globalized society, but a capitalist society. This is increasingly clear to popular movements mobilizing to challenge the world's most powerful corporations.

Popular Resistance and Progressive Globalism

Opinion polls show that four out of five Americans would avoid shopping in a store that sells garments made with sweatshop labor, and would pay a dollar more on a $20 item for a guarantee that the product came from a worker-friendly supplier. Companies know that their exploitative policies are unpopular and that they are vulnerable when capitalism's business-as-usual can be dramatized in the mind of the public. The in-their-face militancy of grassroots labor, environmental, and human rights groups has been able to do just this: dramatically and powerfully putting forth evidence that companies like Wal-Mart and Disney are greedy exploiters, and urging people to stand up for workers' rights.

The fact that Disney pays six cents in Haiti for garments it sells for $19.99 in the United States, and other similar statistics, are being made widely known by groups like the National Labor Committee and the People of Faith Network. Militant marches, demonstrations, leaflets, press conferences, and other consciousness-spreading tools have begun to produce widespread awareness of how capitalism operates in our time. The Global Sweatshop Coalition of solidarity, justice groups, and trade unions has informed many who were previously unaware, by bringing workers from El Salvador, Haiti and Nicaragua to U.S. audiences. A People's Right to Know Campaign is calling for corporate disclosure about who makes products, where, and under what living and working conditions. Often, companies refuse to release such detailed information to consumers.

A number of developments suggest that a powerful movement is emerging. Schools are being challenged to be sweatshop-free in their purchasing. As big corporations themselves, many schools are resisting such pressures. Jim Keady, former soccer star, assistant coach at St. John's University, and theology student, was forced to resign for protesting the unethical relationship his school had entered into with Nike, in which the company gave the school money and equipment, turning the coaches and players into moving billboards for products made in sweatshops. Keady continues to speak out and challenge the morality of his school's deal with Nike. Nike has similar arrangements with over 200 schools. Leo Johnson, a youth worker at the Edenwald-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Gunhill Neighborhood Center in the Bronx, has inspired kids to refuse Nike sneakers (and to return their old pairs to the company) in protest, until Nike starts to pay all of its workers a living wage. A growing coalition of settlement houses and youth organizations is asking young people to face not only what Nike has done to its workers abroad but what Nike is doing to them, through advertising that mercilessly pushes $150 shoes without which some refuse to go to school (and for which others steal). This advertising is, in Johnson's words, "sucking the brains out of their heads."

At a gut level, people understand that the fetishism of commodities is powerfully destructive to human potential. The anti-sweatshop coalition holding candlelight marches on New York's Fifth Avenue, from Niketown to the Disney store, makes the connections as well. Disney's relentless, upbeat, tirelessly promoted image of harmless consumerist family values does not sit well with the reality of a greedy, exploitative company, whose abuses range from employing sweatshops in Haiti to busting a technical workers' union at its ABC-TV network.

Companies like Nike are scrambling for cover. They are negotiating with church and labor groups, human rights and workers' rights coalitions. But these meetings have not produced much substance. They have recently broken down because the companies insist on a code of conduct that, for example, allows them to employ 14-year-old children for up to sixty hours a week at the local "legal" minimum wage, a less-than-living wage set by repressive governments to meet the requirements of these same corporations. The industry's offer of independent monitors (auditors in fact beholden to the companies, with no role for the movement groups) and of inspections (limited to five percent of a company's contractors in any given year) seemed so obviously a whitewash that all groups agreed it was better to have no agreement than to let these companies use a "No Sweat" label in their garments and deceive consumers into thinking that they were treating workers fairly.

Campaigns like the ones mentioned here are, of course, only a beginning. Capitalism will not be overcome or transformed by consumer boycotts. But these consumer rebellions may indicate a change in the wind. Together with popular struggles in some third-world countries, where people have taken to the streets to oppose exploitation by globalized capital, these movements suggest that people are beginning to challenge the idea that there is no alternative.

The conditions that have made globalization possible are the very conditions that now threaten it. The communication breakthroughs that enable global sweatshop production for core markets can also expose its horrors. The tools that make possible overnight wealth for a handful of global speculators also make possible over-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

night global financial panic. Even tightly controlled media and the alternation of competing neoliberal parties, which seemed to offer free elections without risk to the rich or transnational corporations, did not prevent the great majority of Venezuelans from seeking to reject the whole system this past December. In France, the MAI, negotiated in extreme secrecy, has nevertheless been exposed and rejected under severe popular pressure. The same technology that is supposed to be the cause of neoliberalism is making it clearer every day throughout the world that neoliberal globalization is not the inevitable product of technological progress, but the result of a political struggle that is far from over.

why.

In this case, it's not a question.
It's a magazine.

Each issue is a resource for action.
Each issue challenges hunger and poverty.
Each issue advances a
sustainable world and economic justice.

To subscribe to the magazine or
to find out more about World Hunger Year's programs:
Call: (212) 629-8850

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

REFLECTIONS ON THE POLITICS OF CULTURE

by MICHAEL PARENTI

In the academic social sciences, students are taught to think of culture as representing the customs and mores of a society, including its language, art, laws, and religion. Such a definition has a nice neutral sound to it, but culture is anything but neutral. Much of what is thought to be our common culture is the selective transmission of class-dominated values. Antonio Gramsci understood this when he spoke of class hegemony, noting that the state is only the "outer ditch behind which there [stands] a powerful system of fortresses and earthworks," a network of cultural values and institutions not normally thought of as political.[1] What we call "our culture" is largely reflective of existing hegemonic arrangements within the social order, strongly favoring some interests over others.

A society built upon slave labor, for instance, swiftly develops a racist culture, replete with its own peculiar laws, science, and mythology, along with mechanisms of repression directed against both slaves and the critics of slavery. After slavery is abolished, racism continues to fortify the inequitable social relations—which is what Engels meant when he said that slavery leaves its "poisonous sting" long after it passes into history.

Culture, then, is not an abstract force that floats around in space and settles upon us—though given the seemingly subliminal ways it influences us, it can feel like a disembodied, ubiquitous entity. In fact, culture is mediated through a social structure. We get our culture from a network of social relations involving other people: primary groups such as family, peers, and other informal associations within the community or, as is increasingly the case, from more formally

---

Michael Parenti's two most recent books are *Blackshirts and Reds: Rational Fascism and the Overthrow of Communism* and *America Beseiged*, both published by City Lights.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

articulated and legally chartered institutions such as schools, media, churches, government agencies, corporations, and the military.

Linked by purchase and persuasion to dominant ruling-class interests, such social institutions are regularly misrepresented as politically neutral, especially by those who occupy command positions within them or are otherwise advantaged by them. What Gramsci said about the military might apply to most other institutions in capitalist society: their "so-called neutrality only means support for the reactionary side."[2]

The Slippery Slope of Cultural Relativism

When culture is treated as nothing more than an innocent accretion of solutions and practices, and each culture is seen as something inviolate, then all cultures are accepted at face value and cultural relativism is the suggested standard. So we hear that we should avoid ethnocentrism and respect other cultures. To be sure, after centuries in which indigenous cultures have been trampled underfoot by colonizers, we need to be acutely aware of the baneful effects of cultural imperialism and of the oppressive intolerance manifested toward diverse ethnic cultures within our own society.

But the struggle to preserve cultural diversity should not give carte blanche to anyone in any society to violate basic human rights. Many patriarchal cultures, for example, are replete with "sacrosanct customs" that, on closer examination, promote the worst kinds of gender victimization, including the mutilation of female children through clitorectomy and infibulation, and the sale of young girls into sexual slavery. I once heard an official from Saudi Arabia demand that Westerners show respect for his culture: he was addressing critics who denounced the Saudi practice of stoning women to death on charges of adultery. He failed to mention that there were people within his own culture—including, of course, the female victims—who were not enamored of such time-honored traditions.

For most of U.S. history, slaveholders and then segregationists insisted that we respect the South's "way of life." In Nazi Germany, anti-Semitism was an integral part of the ongoing political culture. Many evildoers might rally under the banner of cultural relativism. The truth is, as we struggle for human betterment, we must challenge the oppressive and destructive features of all cultures, including our own.

In academic circles, postmodernist theorists offer their own variety of cultural relativism. They reject the idea that human perceptions can transcend culture. For them, all kinds of knowledge are little more than social constructs. Evaluating any culture from a platform of fixed and final truths, they say, is a dangerous project that often contains the seeds of more extreme forms of domination. In re-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sponse, I would argue that, even if there are no absolute truths, this does not mean all consciousness is hopelessly culture-bound. People from widely different societies and different periods in history can still recognize forms of class, ethnic, and gender oppression in various cultures across time and space. Though culture permeates all our perceptions, it is not the totality of human experience.

At the heart of postmodernism's cultural relativism is an old-fashioned anti-Marxism, an unswerving ideological acceptance of existing bourgeois domination. Some postmodernists depict themselves as occupying "positions of marginality," taking lonely and heroic stands against hoards of doctrinaire hardliners who supposedly overpopulate the nation's campuses. So the postmodernists are able to enjoy the appearance of independent critical thought without ever saying anything that might jeopardize their academic careers.

The Limits of Culturalistic Explanations

Taught to think of culture as an age-old accretion of practice and tradition, we mistakenly conclude that it is not easily modified. In fact, as social conditions and interests change, much (but certainly not all) of culture proves mutable. For almost four hundred years, the wealthy elites of Central America were devoutly Roman Catholic, a religious affiliation that was supposedly deeply ingrained in their culture. Then, in the late 1970s, after many Catholic clergy proved friendly to liberation theology, these same elites discarded their Catholicism and joined Protestant fundamentalist denominations that espoused a more comfortably reactionary line. Their four centuries of "deeply ingrained Catholic culture" were discarded within a few years once they deemed their class interests to be at stake.

Generally, whenever anyone offers culturalistic explanations for social phenomena, we should be skeptical. For one thing, culturalistic explanations of third-world social conditions tend to be patronizing and ethnocentric. I heard someone explain the poor performance of the Mexican army, in the storm rescue operations in Acapulco in October 1997, as emblematic of a lackadaisical Mexican way of handling things: It's in their culture, you see; everything is mañana mañana with those people. In fact, poor rescue responses have been repeatedly evidenced in the United States and numerous other countries. And more to the point, the Mexican army, financed and advised by the U.S. national security state, has performed brilliantly in Chiapas, doing the thing it was trained to do, which is not rescuing people but intimidating and killing them, waging low-intensity warfare, systematically occupying lands, burning crops, destroying villages, executing suspected guerrilla sympathizers, and tightening the noose around the Zapatista social base. To say the Mexican army performed poorly in rescue operations is to presume that the army is there to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

serve the people rather than to control them on behalf of those who own Mexico. Culturalistic explanations divorced of political-economic realities readily lend themselves to such obfuscation.

The Commodification of Culture

As the capitalist economy has grown in influence and power, much of our culture has been expropriated and commodified. Its use value increasingly takes second place to its exchange value. Nowadays we create less of our culture and buy more of it, until it really is no longer *our* culture. We now have a special term for segments of culture that remain rooted in popular practice: we call it "folk culture," which includes folk music, folk dance, folk medicine, and folk mythology. These are curious terms, when you think about it, since by definition all culture should be folk culture. That is, all culture arises from the social practices of us folks. But primary-group folk creation has become so limited as to be accorded a distinctive label.

A far greater part of our culture is now aptly designated as "mass culture," "popular culture," and even "media culture," owned and operated mostly by giant corporations whose major concern is to accumulate wealth and make the world safe for their owners, the goal being exchange value rather than use value, social control rather than social creativity. Much of mass culture is organized to distract us from thinking too much about larger realities. The fluff and puffery of entertainment culture crowds out more urgent and nourishing things. By constantly appealing to the lowest common denominator, a sensationalist popular culture lowers the common denominator still further. Public tastes become still more attuned to cultural junk food, the big hype, the trashy, flashy, wildly violent, instantly stimulating, and desperately superficial offerings.

Such fare often has real ideological content. Even if supposedly apolitical in its intent, entertainment culture (which is really the entertainment *industry*) is political in its impact, propagating images and values that are often downright sexist, racist, consumerist, authoritarian, militaristic, and imperialist.[3]

With the ascendancy of mass culture we see a loss of people's culture. From the nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century, a discernible working-class culture existed, with its union halls, songs, poetry, literature, theater, night schools, summer camps, and mutual assistance societies, many of which were organized by anarchists, socialists, and communists, and their various front groups. But not much of this culture could survive the twin blows of McCarthyism and television, both of which came upon us at about the same time.

The commodification of culture can be seen quite starkly in the decline of children's culture. In my youth, I and my companions were out on the streets of New York playing games of childhood's creation

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

without adult supervision: ringalevio, kick-the-can, hide-and-seek, tag, Johnny-on-the-pony, stickball, stoopball, handball, and box-ball. Today, one sees little evidence of children's culture in most U.S. communities. The same seems to have happened in other countries. Martin Large notes that in England, in the parks and streets that once were "bubbling with children playing," few youngsters are now to be seen participating in the old games. Where have they all gone? The television "has taken many of our children away" from their hobbies and street games.[4]

This process, whereby a profit-driven mass culture preempts people's culture, is extending all over the world, as third-world critics of cultural imperialism repeatedly remind us.

Limited Accommodations

There are two myths I would like to put to rest: first, the notion that culture is to be treated as mutually exclusive of, and even competitive with, political economy. A friend of mine who edits a socialist journal once commented to me: "You emphasize economics. I deal more with culture." I thought this an odd dichotomization since my work on the news media, the entertainment industry, social institutions, and political mythology has been deeply involved with both culture and economics. In fact, I doubt one can talk intelligently about culture if one does not at some point also introduce the dynamics of political economy. This is why, when I refer to the "politics of culture," I mean something more than just the latest controversy regarding federal funding of the arts.

The other myth is that our social institutions are autonomous entities, not linked to each other. In fact, they are interlocked by corporate law, public and private funding, and overlapping corporate elites who serve on the governing boards of universities, colleges, private schools, museums, symphony orchestras, the music industry, libraries, churches, newspapers, magazines, radio and TV networks, publishing houses, and charitable foundations.

New cultural formations arise from time to time, usually within a limited framework that does not challenge dominant class arrangements. So we have struggles around feminism, ethnic equality, gay rights, family values, and the like—all of which can involve important, life-and-death issues. And if pursued as purely lifestyle issues, they can win occasional exposure in the mainstream media. Generally, however, the higher circles instinctively resist any pressure toward social equalization, even in the realm of "identity politics." Furthermore, they use lifestyle issues such as gay rights and abortion rights, among others, as convenient targets against which to misdirect otherwise legitimate mass grievances.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The victories won by "identity politics" usually are limited to changes in procedure and personnel, leaving institutional class interests largely intact. For instance, feminists have challenged patriarchal militarism, but the resulting concession is not an end to militarism but women in the armed forces.

Eventually we get female political leaders, but of what stripe? We get Lynn Cheney, Elizabeth Dole, Margaret Thatcher and—just when some of us were recovering from Jeane Kirkpatrick—Madeleine Albright. It is no accident that this type of woman is most likely to reach the top of the present politico-economic structure. While indifferent or even hostile to the feminist movement, conservative females reap some of its benefits.

Professions offer another example of the false autonomy of cultural practices. Whether composed of anthropologists, political scientists, physicists, doctors, lawyers, or librarians, professional associations emphasize their commitment to independent expertise, and deny that they are wedded to the dominant politico-economic social structure. In fact, many of their most important activities are directly regulated by corporate interests or take place in a social context that is less and less of their own making, as doctors and nurses are discovering in their dealings with HMOs.

Supply Creates Demand

We are taught that the "free market of ideas and images," as it exists in mass culture today, is a response to popular tastes. Media culture gives the people what they want. Demand creates supply. This is a very democratic-sounding notion. But quite often it is the other way around: supply creates demand. Thus, the supply system to a library can be heavily prefigured by all sorts of things other than readers' preferences. Discussions of censorship usually focus on limited controversies, as when some people agitate to have this or that "offensive" book removed from the shelves. Such incidents leave the impression that the library is struggling to maintain itself as a free and open system. Overlooked is the prestructured selectivity, the censorship that occurs even before anyone gets a chance to see what books are on the shelves, a censorship imposed by a book market dominated by six or seven conglomerates. There is a difference between *incidental* censorship and *systemic* censorship. Mainstream pundits sedulously avoid discussion of the latter.

Systemic repression exists in other areas of cultural endeavor. Consider the censorship controversies in regard to art. These focus on whether a particular painting or photograph, sporting some naughty thing like frontal nudity, should be publicly funded and shown to consenting adults. But there is a systemic suppression as well. The image we have of the artist as an independent purveyor of creative

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

culture can be as misleading as the image we have of other professionals. What is referred to as the "art world" is not a thing apart from the art market; the latter has long been heavily influenced by a small number of moneyed persons like Huntington Hartford, John Paul Getty, Nelson Rockefeller, and Joseph Hirschorn, who have treated works of art not as part of our common treasure but, in true capitalist style, as objects of pecuniary investment and private acquisition. They have financed the museums and major galleries, art books, art magazines, art critics, university endowments, and various art schools and centers—reaping considerable tax write-offs in so doing.

As trustees, publishers, patrons, and speculators, they and their associates exercise influence over the means of artistic production and distribution, setting ideological limits to artistic expression. Artists who move beyond acceptable boundaries run the risk of not being shown. Art that contains radical political content is labeled "propaganda" by those who control the art market. Art and politics do not mix, we are told—which would be news to such greats as Goya, Degas, Picasso, and Rivera. While professing to keep art free of politics ("art for art's sake"), the gatekeepers impose their own politically motivated definition of what is and is not art. The art they buy, show, and have reviewed is devoid of critical social content even when realistic in form. What is preferred is Abstract Expressionism and other forms of Nonobjective Art that are sufficiently ambiguous to stimulate a broad range of aesthetic interpretations, having an iconoclastic and experimental appearance while remaining politically safe.

The same is true of the distribution of films and their redistribution as videos. Some are mass-marketed while others quickly drop from sight. Capitalism will sell you the camera to make a movie and the computer to write a book. But then there is the problem of distribution. Will a film get mass exposure in a thousand theaters across the nation, or will the producer spend the next five years of his or her life toting it around to college campuses, union halls, and special one-day matinee showings at local art theaters (if that)?

So it is with publications. Books from one of the big publishing conglomerates are likely to get more prominent distribution and more library adoptions than books by Monthly Review Press, Verso, Pathfinder, or International Publishers. Libraries and bookstores (not to mention newsstands and drugstores) are more likely to stock *Time* and *Newsweek* than *Monthly Review*, *CovertAction Quarterly*, or other such publications. A small branch library will have no room or funds to acquire leftist titles but will procure seven copies of Colin Powell's autobiography or some other media-hyped potboiler.

It is not just that supply is responding to demand. Where did the demand to read about Colin Powell come from? The media blitz that legitimized the Gulf War also catapulted its top military

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

commander into the national limelight and made him an overnight superstar. It was supply *creating* demand.

Imperfect Socialization

One hopeful thought remains: socialization into the dominant culture does not operate with perfect effect. In the face of all monopolistic ideological manipulation, many people develop a skepticism or outright disaffection based on the sometimes evident disparity between social actuality and official ideology. There is a limit to how many lies people will swallow about the reality they are experiencing. If this were not so, if we were all perfectly socialized into the ongoing social order and thoroughly indoctrinated into the dominant culture, then I would not have been able to record these thoughts and you could not have understood them.

Years ago, William James observed how custom can operate as a sedative while novelty (including dissidence) is rejected as an irritant.[5] Yet I would argue that after awhile sedatives can become suffocating and irritants can enliven. People sometimes hunger for the uncomfortable critical perspective that gives them a more meaningful explanation of things. By becoming aware of this, we have a better chance of moving against the tide. It is not a matter of becoming the faithful instrument of any particular persuasion but of resisting the misrepresentations of a thoroughly ideologized bourgeois culture. In class struggle, culture is a key battleground. The capitalist rulers know this—and so should we.

NOTES

1. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (New York: International Publishers, 1971), p. 238.
2. Ibid, p. 212.
3. See my *Make-Believe Media: The Politics of Entertainment* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), chapter 1 and passim.
4. Martin Large, *Who's Bringing Them Up?* (Gloucester, England: M.H.C. Large, 1980), p. 35.
5. William James, "The Sentiment of Rationality," in his *Essays in Pragmatism* (New York: Hafner, 1948), p. 13.

MONTHLY REVIEW

OUR WEBSITE ADDRESS IS:

http://www.MonthlyReview.org/MonthlyReview

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A SECOND WAVE OF NATIONAL LIBERATION?

by FAWZY MANSOUR

Not so long ago, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) promoted a semi-official series of meetings (national, regional, and tri-continental), in preparation for its periodic international plenary conferences. UNCTAD was then the UN agency most seriously concerned with problems of third-world development as they related to international economic relations. The preparatory meetings had the double aim of engaging as many third-world officials, academics, and practitioners as possible in a serious dialogue on these problems, and mobilizing as much public opinion behind the proposed solutions as it could. The second aim was as important as the first, since those solutions, more often than not, ran up against fierce first-world opposition.

In early 1976, I attended one such tri-continental meeting in Sri Lanka. The participating continents were, of course, Asia, Africa, and Latin America. In one of the plenary sessions, I proposed the adoption, by the third-world countries, of seven concise policy guidelines, which can be summarized as follows:[1]

1. Trade between third-world countries should be direct. Imports from, as well as exports to, third-world countries, which pass through the intermediation of a third party, should be prohibited.

2. A system of generalized preferences should be established between third-world countries. That system should cover transport and insurance as well.

3. Payments from one third-world country to another should not pass through non-third-world intermediaries.

Fawzy Mansour is Professor Emeritus of Political Economy at Ain Shams University in Cairo, Egypt. Until recently, he was Chairman of the Arab Research Center in Cairo. He is currently engaged in writing a book on the rise and development of the world capitalist system, entitled *From Piracy to Globalism.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

4. Third-world producers' associations which result in the rise of prices should compensate other third-world countries for additional payments involved.

5. Technology devised in third-world countries should be made available freely, or at especially advantageous terms, to other third-world countries.

6. Transnational third-world firms should have preferential treatment in third-world countries. No firm in which non-third-world capital participates can be considered a third-world transnational firm.

7. Taxes should be imposed on all exports from third-world countries to non-third-world countries and on imports from non-third-world countries. The receipts of the taxes should be devoted to development purposes and operated by a special organization in which all developing countries are represented.

At present, when the third world is in retreat on all fronts, these guidelines may appear somewhat heroic. At the time they were proposed, they did not seem to be. In fact, they created quite a stir, both in the media and in academia. The reason should be ascribed more to the objective conditions then prevailing in the world at large than to the innate cogency of the guidelines.

Economic Victories of the First National Liberation Wave

In 1976, the third world was still living in the glow of the first important rise in oil prices, which took place in the wake of the 1973 Israeli-Arab war and the restrictions on production and exports used by Arab countries as a weapon in this war. Subsequent concerted, effective action, taken by the more important oil-producing countries (Arab and non-Arab), helped to maintain the level of prices reached at that time. On strict economic grounds, the rise was merely a readjustment of ridiculously low oil prices, which were maintained for decades by big oil companies, vehemently supported by their governments, which, together with banks and traders, reaped the main benefits. These adjustments were made and for quite some time maintained, notwithstanding the fulmination, threats and schemes the first world used to defeat what they considered to be an unforgivable affront to their supremacy—their ability to determine the size of world production, the location and prices of strategic commodities.

Like the oil-producing countries, other third-world producers of agricultural and mineral commodities (coffee, tea, cocoa, rubber, copper, tin, and so on) saw the real price of their exports steadily fall, over decades, especially as compared to the rising prices of their imports from the rich industrial countries. The result was a decrease in their foreign earnings, an increase in their foreign debt, and a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

continuous fall in their standard of living. Notwithstanding vehement opposition and much obstruction from the first world, the successful example of the oil-producing countries encouraged them to set up or attempt to set up commodity-producers' boards, associations and consortia.

Third-world countries had many other grievances against first-world economic supremacy. Many other channels existed, through which surpluses flowed from the third-world countries to the first world. Most of the trade and financial transfers between third-world countries had to be intermediated by first-world countries. These countries naturally reaped for themselves the notorious surplus which intermediaries collected from both producers and consumers in every age and type of society. This was especially true if the intermediaries managed, as the first world generally did, to create for themselves various monopoly positions along the lines of intermediation.

The Hong Kong experience gives the measure of the enormity of this surplus. A little island with no natural resources or native industries to speak of, and a meager population of six and a half million, it managed, essentially through intermediation activities in trade and finance, to build an economy reaching US$700 billion (i.e., twenty-five percent of mainland China) and achieve a per capita GNP of US$21,650.

As used here and applied to North-South relations, the term "monopoly" has far wider connotations (closely connected to my own understanding of the theory of value and its determinants) than one usually meets in orthodox economic (read: Western) textbooks and their third-world imitations. It encompasses the exclusive historical sources of accumulation acquired by the West, the higher wages maintained there by trade union movements, acting in a democratic setting, and the power relations between North and South which forced on the latter a particular type of international division of labor, favoring the former and hampering the development of the latter. The other monopolies in the fields of technology, in advanced capital-goods sectors, in means of transport and communication, in banking, insurance, and maritime transport and, of course, in the fields of pure and applied science (R & D), are covered by the same concept of monopoly and were—and still are—as important a source for the transfer of resources from South to North as the ever-deteriorating terms of trade.

The successes of the first wave of the national liberation movements (1945-1978), their important social and economic content, the example of OPEC and other producers' associations, and the flowering of various development theories in the third world (which freed many public opinion leaders, and far fewer academics, from the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

incapacitating hold of obscure ideological economic discourse masquerading as exact science), were all translated formally in the various UN declarations and resolutions which marked the seventies, and so much frightened the West. The Declaration and Action Program on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order [UN General Assembly Resolutions 3201 (S-VI) and 3202 (S-VI) of May 1, 1974]; the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States (UN General Assembly Resolution 3281 (XXIX, December 12, 1976); and the resolution of the Seventh Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on Economic Cooperation in November 1975, are three of the more remarkable examples of a series of historical UN resolutions dealing with the world economy and seriously taking into account the interests of the third world.

The Relapse

The practical impact of those unprecedented charters and resolutions on the actual working of the World Capitalist System (WCS), hence on the disadvantaged position of the third world, was rather limited. They were carried from the heated atmosphere of the General Assembly's hall to the register of accomplished legislation on the high waves of successive third-world military and political victories in the field. When these victories dried up and ceased to astound the world, the UN legislative provisions became what every law not suported by power is: dry ink on the pages of closed books.

A new World Economic Order (WEO) was indeed ushered in, in the wake of the second Gulf War of 1990-1991, but it was a very different order from the one aspired to and voted for by the peoples of the world in the UN assemblies. Indeed it was diametrically opposed to it, both in letter and spirit. I have no wish to determine here when the first great wave of third-world liberation subsided, for the decline of great historical movements is a protracted process which cannot be pinned to a definite date. Suffice it to say that the 1967 Arab defeat in the Israeli-Arab war and the subsequent generalized Arab decline on all fronts; the fratricidal (and suicidal) wars in Africa and elsewhere; the collapse of the Soviet Union, which whatever may have been its genetic or acquired weaknesses, has been in most crucial instances a staunch ally of national liberation movements; the ignominious Iraqi-Iranian War and the foolish Iraqi invasion of Kuwait; and the built-in weaknesses of the PLO, have all been landmarks along that road. No wonder the price of oil has now collapsed to an all-time low of eleven dollars, less in real terms than it was in 1971. Other raw materials, which are the mainstay of many poor countries' foreign earnings, are experiencing similar decline. Foreign debts, especially when measured against foreign claims on their meager earnings, are becoming an intolerable burden and source of impoverishment.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The World Capitalist System as the Primary Unit of Analysis: An Analogy with the National Capitalist System

These developments should come as no surprise to anyone who takes the World Economy (the WCS) as the primary unit of social analysis. For just as in a national capitalist system (NCS), relative or abolute impoverishment of the majority, unemployment or marginalization of many, and the spread of various manifestations of social disorder, are the natural results of the working of its laws, so do these phenomena manifest themselves in the WCS on a world scale as a result of the same laws, except, of course, that the mechanisms for surplus-flow from the base to the top may be somewhat different.

The achievements of first-world trade unionism (social democracy) in improving the conditions of labor in first-world countries may not be reproducible on a world scale; the dominant class in first-world capitalist countries can afford to make concessions to their working classes at the expense of third-world countries, to whom the burden of such concessions were shifted. No similar shift could operate in favor of the dominated and exploited countries within the WCS. The first-world countries cannot, as yet, compensate for concessions made to the third world by engineering a new flow of surpluses from the moon! The inevitable result is that, in a "fully achieved" WCS, impoverishment will hit the poor multitudes in its "base" countries heavier than it ever did in a national capitalist system; misery and alienation will hit them in more various and cruel ways, and despair may drive many into the blind alleys of regression. It should be clear, when making the analogy between the NCS and the WCS, that the totality of exploited and marginalized masses in third-world countries, and not just their working classes, form the base of the WCS. This means that any analogy between first-world trade unionism and its achievements in the developed NCS and the economic solidarity movement of third-world countries—which will be taken up at a later stage in this paper—should be taken for what it is: an (incomplete) analogy. It is an analogy between the labor-class solidarity within each developed NCS, taking the form of classical trade unionism, and the solidarity between the masses of the third-world countries, which obviously cannot take the "form" of classical trade unionism.[2]

The Experience of the Asian Tigers and Cubs

The experience of some East and Southeast Asian countries may seem to contradict such dire predictions. There is no denying that in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

their various ways, they achieved remarkable successes in getting themselves out of the vicious circle of backwardness, in achieving unprecedented sustained rates of their GNP growth, their exports, the balance of payment surpluses, the application and adaptation of certain types of modern technology and, at least in some of them, in making concessions to some of their working people, which improved their standard of living.

I do not know, however, that these success stories invalidate the analogy I have drawn between the essentials of the NCS and the WCS. Contrary to many other social formations, and to certain dogmatic theorizations, the capitalist system, whether national or worldwide, usually allows a certain degree of mobility between the units which make up classes (individuals in the former and nations in the latter).

This mobility is, however, limited to a definite minority: a small percentage of the privileged few joining the ranks of the impoverished majority, and an equally small—even minute—percentage of the poor rising to the ranks of the various levels of the bourgeoisie; however, a wide residual base remains in its place in both cases. Britain may have sunk to join the "genteel" poor had it not been saved by the United States for various geostrategic, political, and cultural reasons. Japan, notwithstanding its various present difficulties, has definitely migrated to the rich zone of the World System.

The case of the Four East Asian Tigers is different, as indicated in an important study by three notable Egyptian economists.[3] The geopolitical and historical context in which these experiences took place was exceptionally favorable to them. For a considerable period before the Second World War, Korea and Taiwan were colonized by Japan, which, for its own purposes and admittedly using very harsh practices, gave these two countries an adequate modern infrastructure, developed their mineral and agricultural resources, and established some heavy and capital-goods industries—practices which ran counter to the colonial traditions of the West in the rest of the colonial world. Following the Second World War, with victories of socialism in China and the Soviet Union challenging them, the United States and Britain were determined to make the four colonies (later the Four Tigers) a showcase on the eastern edge of Asia, capable of competing with their socialist adversaries for people's minds. For that purpose, development funds flowed to them on an unprecedented scale, technology was obtained at low or no cost, markets were thrown wide open for their products in the metropolitan countries, and radical agrarian reforms were not merely tolerated but positively encouraged. Most remarkable of all, development and trade strategies and policies (including a certain level of national planning and the development of a public sector), which were vehemently opposed in other third-world countries, were not frowned

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

upon. Evidently, these favorable conditions, and many others, are not reproducible elsewhere.

The Four Tigers had in common many unattractive aspects, which are usually glossed over by the promoters of their type of development. Notwithstanding the initial radical redistribution of wealth—especially of land—and some nationalization measures with which two of these began their trajectory, they all had to be subjected to extremely oppressive types of regimes, especially in regard to the working class. Wages had to be kept at a ridiculously low level in order to maintain their export advantage over more advanced, high-wage countries. Thus, they burdened the disadvantaged poor with the enormous weight of the high rates of investment, which was one of the main factors of their success.

Without denying them, however, I do not give much weight to the stories of corruption, nepotism, and cronyism, especially within the financial sector, which were later blamed for their recent difficulties, for these pertain to the stages of primitive and early capitalist accumulation everywhere. Even now, the pages of contemporary advanced capitalism are not as lily-white as textbooks lead us to believe: witness the stories of corruption and mismanagement which periodically fill the papers in the United States (the notorious Savings and Loan scandals), in the United Kingdom, in Italy and in Japan, especially in the same financial sectors which were blamed for the difficulties of the Asian Tigers and Cubs. We should also discount as a reason for the recent setbacks the often-blamed high percentage of borrowing of short-term foreign currency, much of which was used to finance real estate speculation, for in various periods these were also features of the U.S. economy (note what happened during the second term of the Reagan administration).

If these cannot be the main reasons for the setbacks which struck East Asian countries one after the other, then what were they? Those setbacks, you will remember, happened only after the collapse of the socialist system, hence the disappearance of the need to maintain the East Asian economies as showcases. With the disappearance of this political imperative, economic considerations came to the forefront. These were two: one of a profit-making nature, and the other strategic.

As a result of fierce popular political and economic struggle, wages began to rise considerably, especially in South Korea and Taiwan. It became much more profitable for foreign capital (including American and Japanese) to move many of its productive facilities to other East Asian countries, the so-called Asian Cubs, where wages and other amenities were kept at a much lower rate. This enabled foreign investors to sell their products in their own home and international markets at cheaper prices, and thus

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

achieve much higher profits. This capital migration could not fail to have a deep destabilizing effect on the previously favored Tigers, corruption or no corruption.

The strategic consideration comes from the internal economic and political needs of the highly-developed countries themselves. Certain sectors of their economy—the so-called transnationals—may find it more profitable to move part or all of their activities to cheap-labor countries. Contrary to popular belief, however, these do not dominate the economic policies of these countries, except with regard to certain sectors where strategic raw materials (i.e., oil) are involved. Other home-based industries may have different and more weighty interests. Other countervailing factors, such as home-labor interests and greater political and public awareness of the catastrophic societal results of de-industrialization, may come into play. There are many indications that these factors are progressively playing a more important role in designing the strategy of first-world countries, i.e, the various discrete restrictions on free trade with low-wage countries, and the ominous policy restrictions affecting growth in the defaulting East Asian Tigers and Cubs, imposed by the World Bank and the IMF.

Japan managed to escape this fate because, for various historical reasons, it grew too big before it could be snared. Neither China nor India is likely to fall into this trap because, before opening up to the outside world, they made sure that, under some sort of auto-centered self-reliant development strategy, they built a broad and deep industrial base which could weather the onslaught of the turbulent storms of the WCS.

The Second National Liberation Wave

It is against this background that the series of summit meetings of the Group of Fifteen Third-World Countries must be viewed. The first of these meetings was held in Kuala Lumpur in 1990 and the eighth meeting is about to be held in Cairo. The movement is progressively broadening its aims from one summit to the next. It encourages deep reflection on the causes of the economic problems which plague third-world countries, and effective solutions to them. Most importantly, it strives to devise various businesslike organs and mechanisms whose task it is to insure that these solutions are implemented. I venture to think that, following the collapse of the first mighty Third-World Liberation Movement which began in 1945, the recent movement of the fifteen third-world countries may well be ushering in the beginning of a great second wave of third-world liberation. Given the deep, multifaceted crisis in which the first world seems to be engulfed, the world seems to be poised for such a rejuvenating movement.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In contrast to the first wave, it is essentially an economic solidarity movement, not a political one, though it is not oblivious to the wider political issues which can shape our world, such as the future of the non-aligned movement in the post-Cold War period, the necessity of restructuring the United Nations, especially the Security Council, and giving the poorer countries a more effective role in this body.

The greater emphasis on economic questions, especially those relating to South-South cooperation, may well reflect a laudable awareness that formal political freedom does not necessarily entail economic liberation. Building on the restricted political freedoms they had acquired, the best plan for achieving both sovereign political independence and genuine economic development is to concentrate on and focus their efforts toward economically meaningful goals.

The new movement definitely incorporates the great goals of the seventies, but adds to them more realism and practicality; periodicity of summit meetings is insisted upon. A permanent bureau for the movement was created. Projects like the study of ways and means for policy coordination and increasing South-South trade; the creation of a third-world database; and the criteria and measures of quality control and the mechanisms for strengthening the links between businessmen in third-world countries, have been assigned for research to certain countries. Institutional links between businessmen in both the public nd private sectors, such as fairs and facilities for making deals, are being created. This is a positive development. The temptation, however, to transform summit meetings essentially into fairs for showing off and making business deals must be resisted, for the new creation should be above all a think tank, a policy-maker and a decision-making body, and not just a marketplace dominated by businessmen.

It is heartening to read that a "moderate" head of state, in an informal press meeting, defined the Group as a "political economic group representing countries of the South and defending their interests and striving to organize South-South cooperation and inaugurating a serious and equal dialogue with the North." He added in a recent public speech that, unless the international community enabled every country to introduce the economic transformation which takes into consideration its own conditions, the world transformation will rightfully lose its legitimacy and become furthest removed from globalism and universalism. It will become the monopoly of a definite group of peoples who reap the fruits of transformation, and lay down its rules, criteria, and dispositions. Another head of state, whose country was vandalized by irresponsible—or perhaps purposeful—financial speculation, announced that whereas the nineties were

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

declared the decade of growth and sustained development in the North, for the South it is the lost development decade.

Most heartening of all is the fact that the Group of Fifteen does not set itself up as an exclusive club. It speaks in the name of the third world, looks after the interests of its poorer segments, and attempts to co-opt more countries to the Group.

Some countries of the South are still surprisingly absent, like South Africa. Less surprising, however, is the absence of the Four Asian Tigers. I certainly do not wish it upon them, but I think that future developments may convince them that their rightful place is with the rest of the third world.

The present article is being completed on the day when newspapers published the Declaration of the 8th Summit, so there is little time or space for analyzing its content. Certain remarks, however, strike me. The Declaration is less candid, less rigorous, in describing the present world economic situation, its roots, and the ways of reforming it, than even the statements made before and after it by some of the attending heads of state well-known for their "moderation" and caution. Perhaps that is the nature of conferences which tend to agree at the lowest common denominator, but it is a reminder of the famous Lebanese dictum "governments have their necessities but peoples have their needs."

This dictum is not to be taken lightly. In our contemporary world, especially in the third world where some governments may be more eager to curry favor with the Great Powers than to mobilize and educate people about the tasks ahead, the fact is that unless third-world peoples move forcefully and lead their rulers into a struggle for the realization of their goals, those promising formal meetings, instead of being the harbingers of a mighty wave, will recede or break up on the shores of perilous little bargains, as the example of the Palestine National Liberation Movement shows.

The second thing to register here is that the last Summit Declaration was much more preoccupied with pressing issues, especially those relating to the East Asian monetary and financial crisis, than with the big strategic issues relating to the position of third-world countries within the World Economic System, and how that system could be reformed. Also, it was more concerned with the North-South dialogue than with the various types of South-South cooperation and the effective means of implementing them. This confirms what has been implied above: that unless the peoples of the third world, especially, in this case, its intellectuals and educated information media, strongly take possession of this great issue and make it their own, it will always remain fragile.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A Reciprocal Balanced Package Deal

The third-world countries share the most essential causes of underdevelopment, many of its prominent features, and certainly the iron constraints which the first world forces upon them. They also vary enormously in per capita income, level of economic development, types of socio-economic formation, political institutions and culture, natural resources, geographical location, the nature and size of their imports, and in much else. These variations make for considerable divergence in their interests, and in their relationships with one another and the outside world.

The variations, however, should not be allowed to break up the unity of the third world. On the contrary, they can be transformed into grounds for solidarity and strength. This is neither impossible nor difficult. The living example is the states of the European Union, where many of the above differences exist (compare, for example, northern and western Europe with Greece and Portugal). They were able, nevertheless, through scientific thinking and practical constructive steps, to work toward the realization of their daring dreams and achieve unity. In contrast, Arab countries, where unifying factors are stronger, stagnated in their fragmented and conflictual condition, even moved backwards, because their ruling political elites, with their particular selfish interests, allowed what differentiates them to get the upper hand over what unifies them, and when pressed by their own peoples toward some form of unity or cooperation, failed to adopt a rational approach to this goal.

Going into these questions requires much more space than is available here. However, two major points can be stated briefly: On the economic side, the fifteen summit countries, and beyond them the third-world countries in general, should devise a reciprocal and balanced package deal in the fields of commerce and investment, of joint ventures, of the development and adaptation of technology, of policies affecting relations with one another and with the World Economic System, which insures that it will be accepted and implemented by the concerned parties. The guidelines outlined were designed to make possible such a package deal. I believe they can still serve this purpose, nothwithstanding the subsequent developments in the WCS, especially the creation of the World Trade Organization, and all of the agreements and decisions attached to it, which impose on third-world development permanent constraints not at all compensated for by the temporary concessions allowed. This is a specialized subject which should be dealt with by experts who are oriented toward the third world.

On the political side, each third-world state should completely refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of other third-world

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

countries, be they close or far, with full confidence that internal social forces will sooner or later affect internal conditions in various countries in ways which will draw them into the new ascending wave of national liberation.

The Limits of Third-World Trade Unionism

A few important points remain, and can only briefly be referred to here:

1. Third-world countries, forming an integral part of the WCS (the dependent part) cannot on their own, through South-South cooperation alone, hope to achieve results which exceed those attained by the trade union movements for the working classes in advanced countries. More likely, third-world achievements will be less because those countries will be moving inside the economic, social,and political structures of the advanced National Capitalist Systems to their own trade unions, notwithstanding the fact that the power of various organs of the WCS—states as well as international organizations like the World Bank, the IMF and the WTO—are less evident and transparent than the corresponding organs inside the states of the advanced NCSs.[4]

2. The hoped-for second wave of third-world liberation cannot achieve all or part of its goals unless it is accompanied in a significant number of countries by major social, political, and economic transformations which lead to the adoption of what I call here, for the sake of brevity, the Auto-Centered Self-Reliant Strategy of Development.[5]

This strategy does not mean, as some writers pretend, attaining self-sufficiency or isolating themselves from the outside world or fighting against ongoing globalization (as distinguished from the powerful processes of westernization). It simply means: a) the adoption of policies which endow every important third-world country or group of countries with a wide, deep, integrated industrial-technological structure, which is indispensible for the achievement of sustained growth; b) a capacity for the acquisition, application, development, and adaptation of modern technology; c) facilities for mastering engineering design and construction, which form the backbone of any proper industrialization;[6] d) complete mastery over their monetary and financial systems, enabling them to determine the sources, rates, and spheres of saving and investment; and e) control over external economic relations, allowing them to deal with the outside world in such a way as to enlist these relations in service of their own internal development, rather than allowing the external world, especially international institutions, to determine their development strategies in the interest of the dominant countries. In short, the adoption of a bundle of strategies expressed a long time ago, which form the historical foundation and the real content of what has been called (under the misguided influence of ideology or wishful thinking) the stage of transition to socialism (or of building it in the less-developed parts of the WCS, like Russia and China), and which was no more than the occasionally

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

erroneous response to the challenge of varying degrees of backwardness and dependency.

As Far as Thought Can Reach

This is as far as thought can reach concerning future development, if my hunch (it is no more than that) is correct that the WCS, both North and South, is about to enter into a protracted global crisis in certain parts of the world which has already begun in others, and that a positive response to that crisis can only take place if the advanced part is driven to take a rational and gradual approach to real socialism, while the South adopts, under whatever name, the strategy of Auto-Centered Self-Reliant Development.

It is difficult to determine what will take place when this happens, to determine whether these two different lines (which, in an increasingly independent global world, cannot be parallel) will meet in a cooperative way or in a contradictory, possibly antagonistic way, with all the dire results that the second outcome would entail. This is what will essentially determine the course of development in the twenty-first century.

The overall optimism which dominated socialist thought in the nineteenth century, and called on the workers of the world (actually meaning the West) to unite, is no longer sufficient. Historical experience over a whole century has shaken some of the assumptions and theoretical foundations on which that optimism was based, and brought to the foreground other elements which tended to be underestimated, like culture, nationhood, and the sheer atavistic racist and exclusivist sentiment. These factors, which should not in themselves lead to irresolvable antagonism (as the history of many past tolerant civilizations evidences), are being fanned into dangerous flames by narrow vested interests and primitive instincts. All that can be added now is the hope that the encounter between the trajectories of the first and third world will be cooperative rather than catastrophic.

NOTES

1. These guidelines were first published in "Cooperation of Third World Countries: Guidelines for a Charter," Washington "International Development Review," February 1976.
2. This analogy, and the conclusions drawn from it, appeared in various works of mine, starting in 1976. Some of these works are referred to in the following footnotes.
3. Ibrahim el-Essawy, director and editor; Ramzi Zaki; Hassan Al-Fakir; "The Experiences of Newly Industrialized Asian Countries," (Cairo: The National Planning Institute, 1992). (In Arabic.)
4. For the limitations of South Trade Unionism, see my article "Le nouveau syndicat du tiers mode," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, June 1975.
5. For a more detailed account of this subject, see my study "Third World Revolt and Auto-Centered and Self-Reliant Development," IDEP Reproduction 406, 1976. An abridged version appeared in *Toward a New Strategy of Development*, A Rothko Chapel Colloquium (Pergamon Press, 1979).
6. For the crucial importance of industrial design capability, see Ali Naguib, "An Essay on the Industrialization of Egypt," (Cairo, 1985). (In Arabic.)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE U.S. LEFT AND MEDIA POLITICS

by ROBERT W. MCCHESNEY

American democracy is in deep trouble. Cynicism and distrust of the political system, fueled at least in part by imposed ignorance, have grown steadily in recent years. There are several reasons for this, but few as important as the condition of our media. Many Americans, especially those on the left, know that after a generation of rampant consolidation and conglomeration, the American media are dominated by less than twenty firms—and that a half-dozen or so corporate giants hold the commanding positions. These firms use their market power to advance their own and other companies' corporate agendas. And they increasingly commercialize every aspect of our culture. By any known theory of political democracy, this tightly-held media system, accountable only to Wall Street and Madison Avenue, is a poisonous proposition.

A healthy democracy depends on an informed and educated public, but the wealthy and powerful few who make the most important media decisions deny that as a possibility. Theirs is a system in which crucial political issues are barely mentioned, or are molded to fit the confines of their elite debate. The public is thus denied the tools it needs to participate as an informed citizenry. Moreover, the media system not only serves the ideological needs of our business-run society, but is itself a major sector of the economy.

One would expect to see an exploration of ways to fight back, among those who see the industry's concentrated power and untrammeled commercialism as roadblocks in the path of democracy. Yet, for generations, the control and structure of the media industries have been decidedly off-limits as a subject of political debate on the left.

Robert W. McChesney teaches communication and library science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. This piece was originally presented at the "Back to Basics" conference, sponsored by *In These Times*, held in Chicago in October 1998.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

As long as this holds true, it is difficult to imagine any permanent qualitative change for the better in the American media system. Without reform of the industry, the prospects for the United States improving the quality of our democracy seem dim indeed. It is mandatory for the U.S. left to put media reform on its agenda.

Until after the Second World War, concern about media reform was less pressing, because labor and the left understood the importance of communicating with and educating their own members and supporters. Every labor union and political group had its own publications in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Some of the more successful and aggressive unions and political parties had extensive media outlets. In the early 1900s, Socialist Party members and supporters published some 325 English and foreign language daily, weekly and monthly newspapers and magazines. Most of these were privately owned or were the publications of one or another of the 5,000 Socialist Party locals. They reached a total of more than two million subscribers.

Similarly, from the late nineteenth century on, just about every labor union had its own newspaper. In the mid-thirties, when the Congress of Industrial Organizations(CIO) was organized, it explained to its members that the labor movement could not thrive if the press remained the exclusive property of capital, and made the creation of labor and public service media a high priority. So did the more conservative American Federation of Labor's central labor council in Chicago, which established a local radio station as a conscious first step in setting up a pro-working-class network. All of this was part of a broader effort during the period to establish a cultural popular front. It was overwhelmed by corporate opposition in the thirties, and was given the final blow with the start of the Cold War in the late forties.

In sum, labor and the left's declining interest in developing its own independent media can be traced to post-war labor-corporate accommodation and the disruption and decline of the broader left as a result of Cold War anticommunism. The process was aided, too, by the change in corporate journalism in these years from a more open conservativism to a new, ostensibly non-partisan or "objective" professionalism, a change designed to broaden the appeal—and the advertising revenue—of newspapers, magazines, and, later, television.

Then, too, labor and the left, like their corporate opponents, came to see the media largely as a form of public relations. Thus, they fell victim to the belief that the media were not important, that the "real action" for social change lay in organizing and militant activity. Attracting media attention became more important than having a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

means of communication that might educate members and leaders of progressive organizations.

After taking a beating in the media for fifty years, however, organized labor has begun to show some interest in media reform. Labor leaders today are more aware of the huge barrier that the corporate media presents to labor's advance. Yet this sentiment remains largely inchoate. At the 1997 AFL-CIO annual convention, perhaps the most political and vibrant meeting in the organization's history, the issue of media was not even mentioned in passing. Under John Sweeney, the AFL-CIO's initial foray into media activity has not gone beyond the half-baked idea of spending a small fortune on TV ads and hiring PR firms in an attempt to massage the press. In contrast, the United Auto Workers (UAW) recently invested heavily in the United Broadcasting Network, a 100-station radio operation that also publishes a bi-weekly newspaper. The UAW tried something similar in the 1940s, in a failed attempt to combat the antilabor bias of the commercial radio broadcasters of that era. Yet aside from this effort by the UAW, the structural barriers to a democratic or pro-labor media remain unchallenged by labor, at both the national and local levels.

When one sees how labor and progressive social movements have fared in the U.S. media over the past fifty years, the importance of media reform becomes less abstract. In the thirties and forties, nearly every daily newspaper with a medium-to-large circulation had at least one full-time labor editor or beat reporter. When the Flint sitdown strikes established the UAW as a major trade union in the late thirties, it was front-page news. True, the coverage was often unsympathetic, but at least the public knew what was happening. Now, in the nineties, fewer than ten labor reporters remain on daily newspapers in the entire nation. Conversely, there are seemingly thousands of business writers who, daily, fill the nation's papers with their stories. Thus, in 1989, when the largest sitdown strike since Flint took place in Pittston, Virginia, it went virtually unreported. When several leading U.S. trade unions formed a new Labor political party in 1996, that, too, was unreported in the commercial media. Labor coverage has been reduced to stories about how strikers are threatening violence or creating a burden for the people in their communities. If one read only the commercial media, it would be difficult to determine what good was served by having labor unions at all. I do not mean to suggest that corporate media hostility to labor is swallowed hook, line, and sinker by the public. The 1997 Teamster strike against UPS elicited the usual right-wing hysteria about labor, but the remarkable public support for the strikers forced some of the media to deal more fairly with the Teamsters, despite the fact that the press was far from sympathetic to the union.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Meanwhile, the idea of organizing for structural media reform is ignored or opposed by the entire democratic left in the United States. Two of the three new progressive party groups—the Labor Party and the New Party—avoid any mention of media in their core platforms. Some chapters of the Green Party have made an issue of media ownership and control, perhaps influenced by Ralph Nader's persistent call for stricter control over the publicly owned airwaves, but these are token gestures at best. The Progressive caucus of the U.S. Congress has shown only shown slight interest in the matter, although Rep. Bernie Sanders (Ind., VT) recognizes that "This is an issue that is absolutely vital to democracy, and that only the left can address. The New Party, the Green Party, the Labor Party, as well as progressive Democrats, should be all over this issue," he says, though he laments, "for most of the left, it's not even on the agenda." Sanders, the most successful American socialist politician in half a century, is unequivocal about the importance of media reform: "The challenge of our time is to make media relevant for a vibrant democracy."

To a large extent, the absence of informed media politics reflects the power of U.S. media corporations to control and dominate not only mainstream debate, but also debate on the left. After all, why pick a fight with these guys when the chances for success seem so slim, and when there seems to be little public recognition of structural media issues or opposition to the status quo? The corporate media may well be the most powerful adversary in the ranks of capital. They control what the general public sees and reads about the political process in the United States. Critical discussion of media structure is the last thing they want the general public to consider. They prefer to leave analysis of media ownership and advertising to the business pages and the trade press, where such questions are covered solely from investors' point of view. In this climate, it is no surprise that even left critics of the corporate media rarely discuss organizing to change the system; the very prospect seems implausible.

But the left's disinterest in media is not merely the product of ignorance or intimidation. Some on the left dismiss media activism as a waste of time. Their arguments are rarely the result of sustained thought, and range from the idea that the media system is unreformable to the notion that the corporate media system isn't that bad or that influential. The correct path, from this perspective, is simply to develop independent left media on the margins, while devoting organizing efforts elsewhere. Media reform struggles, therefore, are dismissed as the logical province of liberals and single-issue advocates with narrow political vision or platform. Real battles with the ruling class, from this viewpoint, should be fought elsewhere.

This approach is correct on a couple of key points. Firstly, media reform is no substitute for building a democratic left. But the options

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

are not either/or. Virtually all leading left media critics incorporate media criticism into a range of broader political activity. Secondly, it is correct to argue that if we ever build a solid left or labor movement, it will have its own media and we will have less reason to be concerned about how the corporate media system operates. But that begs the question of why we have been incapable of building even a tiny left in the United States for the past thirty years. The corporate media system is not the sole (or even the primary) reason for the lack of a left or a strong labor movement, but it powerfully reinforces the ideological and political power of business.

The political "free market" right understands the importance of media far better than the left. Indeed, the relative success of the right in recent years is largely the result of the development of its own media and influence on the corporate media. Right-wing individuals and foundations have devoted considerable resources to campaigns that have pushed the media to support their programs—social as well as economic. Billionaire right-wingers establish political media primarily to propagate pro-business politics and push the range of political debate ever rightward. Since the seventies the right has worked mightily and with considerable success to establish right-wing journalism.

The political right leads the fight against all forms of noncommercial and nonprofit media. It also battles tirelessly to see that the Public Broadcasting System and National Public Radio stay within the same ideological boundaries as the commercial media. As a result of this pressure, PBS now refuses to permit labor to sponsor programs about workers, even while it begs business lavishly to subsidize programs extolling free enterprise. At the same time, progressive and mainstream foundations virtually ignore this right-wing assault. These groups fear being "political." They end up trying to keep people from falling overboard while conceding the privilege of steering the ship to the right.

Making media reform a component of the labor and left agenda has many potential benefits. Although the issue receives scant public attention, there is evidence of growing public dissatisfaction with the hyper-commercialized media. In few areas are the conflicts between corporate rule and the needs of a democracy more apparent. The left can use media as an educational tool to explain the flaws in the existing social order and to present its vision of what a more democratic society would look like. Many people from across the political spectrum, as well as entirely depoliticized people, are appalled by the commercial carpet bombing of our culture (especially children's culture), and by the collapse of journalism. The left can offer coherent explanations and viable, democratic solutions. Nobody else can.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Labor and the left can also use media reform as an issue that unites its disparate elements, such as environmentalists, feminists, civil rights advocates, and labor activists, along with journalists, artists, educators, librarians, parents, and many others who are discomfited by the commercialization of public life. We should not forget that if the left ignores media reform, it hands the game to the far right, whose bogus analysis and frightening solutions do not keep it from being an active player.

The Struggle for Democratic Media

So what should the left do to address the commercial media system? First and foremost, it has to put media reform on its agenda and work to get its reform proposals before the general public. The core principle is that control over communication has to be taken away from Wall Street and Madison Avenue and put in the hands of citizens, journalists, and others whose concerns are not limited to the defense of corporate profitability.

In nations ranging from New Zealand and Canada to India and Brazil, democratic left electoral parties are increasingly making the break-up of corporate commercial media, and the establishment of a viable non-profit media sector, a main part of their platforms. This is a striking new development in the 1990s. In Sweden, the Left party—which represents those disenchanted with the Social Democratic Party's move toward the right—has made media reform a cornerstone of its platform. In 1998, the Left party scored twelve percent of the vote in national elections, doubling its previous level. Moreover, in many nations there are nascent grassroots media organizations struggling to promote noncommercial and nonprofit media.

Here in the United States, there are a few new media reform efforts, but some are narrowly conceived and suffer from a lack of democratic vision. There is the drive to establish, for example, a civic or public journalism that is largely devoted to counteracting the sensationalism of print and television. Unfortunately, the movement works hand in hand with the very corporate chieftains who have created and molded the existing media. This version of public journalism, not surprisingly, is averse to what it calls "ideological" approaches to the news, opting instead for a supposed objectivity that avoids lively debate and political conflict. Instead it works toward the sort of boringly balanced and antiseptic newsfare that could put the entire nation into a deep, uninformed slumber. By claiming that they want to give readers news that is important to their lives, advocates of public journalism may in fact be assisting in the process of converting journalism into the type of noncon-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

troversial consumer news that delights the advertising community. Such is the logic of a commercialized and depoliticized society.

Those who wish to increase the integrity of commercial journalism should advocate increased power for journalists, which in the commercial media can only be achieved by establishing strong, progressive unions. Media workers' unions need to be supported. The assault on journalists' unions in the United States has been an important factor in the decline of the quality of journalism. Ideally, journalists' and media workers' unions should negotiate for as much control as possible of the editorial and creative process. We need to work to eradicate the control of capital over our journalism and culture, without substituting deadening bureaucratic control.

Another burgeoning area of interest is the media literacy movement, whose aim is to educate people to be skeptical and knowledgeable users of the media. Media literacy has considerable potential as long as it involves an explanation of how the media system actually works, and leads people to want to work toward a better system. But the media literacy movement has a highly visible wing that accepts money from corporate media and advertisers. This version of media literacy implicitly buys into the line that the commercial media simply "give the people what they want." So the media literacy crowd's job is to train people to demand better fare from their presumably willing and obedient corporate media servants. Like public journalism, this attracts foundation support because it is noncontroversial. But this approach may simply help to perpetuate the current situation. "Hey, don't blame us for the lousy stuff we provide," the corporate media giants will say. "We even bankrolled media literacy to train people to demand higher quality fare. The morons simply demanded more of what we are already doing."

Fortunately, some other media groups are more promising. Fairness & Accuracy In Reporting (FAIR), a media watchdog group launched in the 1980s, provides consistent analysis of media trends through published reports and its magazine *Extra!* FAIR's work helps both those who wish to improve the quality of existing journalism and those who seek structural change. Similarly, the Cultural Environment Movement (CEM), founded in the mid-nineties, attempts to draw all sorts of nonprofit and public-interest groups into the campaign for media reform. Like FAIR, it works for improvement within the status quo as well as broader structural reform.

Local media alliances have also been established in numerous North American cities, to create alternative media and to watchdog the local commercial media. These local groups have shown some

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

potential to draw the public into media politics by targeting issues like violence-obsessed local TV news, newspaper "redlining" of poor neighborhoods, the proliferation of alcohol and cigarette billboards in poor and working-class neighborhoods, and the commercialization of education.

Likewise, microradio broadcasting—unlicensed, low-power, noncommercial broadcasting conducted on open slots in the radio spectrum—has become a significant enterprise throughout the nation in the past few years. It offers poor, dispossessed, and marginalized voices an opportunity to be heard.

Slowly but surely, this activity is percolating its way from media activist groups to broader progressive political organizations. The Rainbow/PUSH Coalition is now making media reform one of its primary organizing issues. In 1998, it held public hearings on the problems of media concentration in several U.S. cities, and it has earned the support of a few members of Congress, including John Conyers and Chicago's Bobby Rush. This is a major breakthrough, but it needs to be aggressively followed up by other progressive constituencies.

That all of this activity has blossomed in the current political environment suggests that there may be a wellspring for further media reform activity. However, the movement lacks the resources to exploit this opportunity. This should be the province of organized labor and the philanthropic community. Not surprisingly, given the absence of a coherent political left, the movement also lacks an understanding of where media reform fits into a broader movement democracy. To be successful, media reform needs a resurgent left. But, conversely, for the left to succeed it will need to support the existing nonprofit media to a far greater extent (e.g., *Monthly Review, The Progressive, Z, The Nation, In These Times, Counterpunch, Dollars and Sense, Adbusters, Left Business Observer, NACLA Report, MERIP, Dissent,* Pacifica, Globalvision), create its own media, and fight for media reform.

For these two areas to reinforce each other, labor and the left will have to use their own resources to support and create better noncommercial media and agitate for better results from commercial media. Some labor unions and federations, for example, have begun to encourage the production of labor video documentaries. But all of labor needs to support newspapers, magazines, broadcast stations, and Web sites of their own, and give money and resources to existing community and nonprofit media without direct labor affiliation. This is crucial. Labor needs to grant considerable editorial leeway to media it subsidizes. Unless it does so, the media will tend to be timid, overly concerned with pleasing labor's political

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hierarchy, and unlikely to produce anything vital or interesting to a general public.

Unlike the right, labor and the left can never consider funding alternatives or independent media a satisfactory media program in and of itself. The agenda and activities of the right mesh well with the corporate control of the media, and right media figures move comfortably at all echelons of the corporate media system. A well-established, independent, left media can and will influence mainstream media in a positive manner, but marriage is out of the question, given the differences in social status. The upper limit of this approach is to establish a strong left niche on the margins. This point holds true for the Internet which, for the most part, assimilated into the corporate media. Technology alone cannot undermine the media system.

In addition, labor and the left need to take another page from the political right, which masterfully manipulates traditional U.S. journalism. Like the right, labor and the progressive philanthropic community need to support think tanks of experts who can provide labor and left perspectives on social issues for commercial and noncommercial journalists alike. It can also monitor the massive right-wing campaigns to shape news coverage. The recently formed Institute for Public Accuracy, under the direction of Norman Solomon and Sam Husseini, is one example.

Government media policies also must be changed. There is nothing natural about the existing corporate media system; it is the result of laws, regulations and extensive public subsidies that have been pushed through by the corporate media lobby with almost no public awareness or participation in the legislative process. Our objective is a more diverse and competitive commercial system with a significant nonprofit and noncommercial sector.

There are several legislative proposals to organize around. First, we need to make it easier for people—not just rich people—to make donations to nonprofit media. Why not let everyone deduct $150 from their taxes if they donate it to a nonprofit medium? Second, let's establish a bona fide noncommercial public radio and television system, with local and national stations and networks. The expense should come out of the general budget, though we need to establish a governing mechanism to keep the public broadcasters accountable but not suffocated by politicians. Third, let's really make some demands on commercial broadcasters, and finally get something in return for letting them become filthy rich using the scarce public airwaves at no charge. Why not insist on eliminating advertising on children's and news programs, and use five percent of the broadcasters' revenues to subsidize three or four hours per day of children's and news shows on every channel? And put the control over these shows in the hands of journalists and creative people, not advertising executives! And why not ban running

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

any political ads as a condition for getting a license to broadcast? Fourth, let's go back to the original spirit and intent of our antitrust statutes and break up the media giants, whose concentrations of power should be unthinkable in a democracy. (When the United States occupied Japan and Germany following the Second World War, it instituted policies discouraging media concentration, as this was seen as antidemocratic and fascist-promoting. What was smart policy in 1945 is smart policy today.)

If we won the reforms above, it would automatically add a strong progressive presence to the Internet, because all of the above media would necessarily have an online component.

There are numerous other policies that would promote democratic media. In the short term, however, the most important thing is to put the issue on the political agenda, have sympathetic members of Congress draft legislation that we can organize around, and get the discussion moving forward. This will not be an easy area in which to gain victories. Few mainstream politicians wish to tangle with the media giants. But it is an area with unusual promise for labor and the left. There is little evidence that people are captivated by commercial media fare to the extent the media giants' PR declares. And the bottom line, so to speak, remains clear. Unless we can make some headway on the media front, it will be difficult to get very far anywhere else.

The America of the working class is practically undiscovered. It is like a lost continent. Bits of it come above the surface in our literature occasionally and everyone is amazed. But there is no need yet of going to Africa or the Orient for strange new pioneering. The young writer can find all the primitive material he needs working as a wage slave around the cities and prairies of America.

Do not be passive. Write. Your life in mine, mill and farm is of deathless significance in the history of the world. Tell us about it in the same language you use in writing a letter. It may be literature—it often is. Write. Persist. Struggle.

—*From the editorial of* New Masses *by Mike Gold, January 1929, quoted in* The Vintage Book of Dissent, *Rosen & Widgery, eds.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SOCIAL CHANGE AND HUMAN NATURE

by WILL MILLER

When radical social change is mentioned, apologists for present practice take a philosophical turn. In nearly every discussion of social alternatives to market capitalism, defenders of the marketplace appeal to their own conception of human nature as the final explanation of the predatory competitiveness of our age of waste and greed. We are quickly assured that the ever more unsatisfying and dangerous exploitation of our natural and social environment is an inevitable consequence of our human nature.

According to the market view of human nature, we are—and have always been—greedy, grasping creatures, entirely absorbed in ourselves, manipulating others as means to our own private ends. All human ties of love, affection and social unity are really manipulative appearances that conceal the sheer private opportunism that actually motivates us. We are all bottomless pits of insatiable desires, so no amount of consuming, owning or controlling is ever enough. These traits of individualism are cast as universal human nature, making market capitalism inevitable and radical social change impossible. Occasionally, defenders of market capitalism seem slightly saddened by their own view of human nature. But more often they cannot disguise their pleasure at the dismay they provoke in gentler folk.

It is not without reason that economics has come to be known as the dismal science. Mainstream economists since Adam Smith have assumed that all human relations are ultimately those of the marketplace, of buying and selling, of control and exploitation of the suffering, vulnerability and desperation of others. The current dominance of private property relations—where land, resources and tools are exclusively controlled by a small minority of individuals for their private perpetual reward—is projected backward over the whole span

---

Will Miller has been assistant professor of philosophy at the University of Vermont for thirty years. He is an activist and organizer on the campus and in the community, where he serves on the board of the Green Mountain Fund for Popular Struggle.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of human history. However useful this projection may be for justifying existing market society, it is strikingly poor anthropology, dubious history, and third-rate psychology.

But it seems actual human history has had a much different bent. For our first few hundred thousand years on this planet—according to current evidence—humans lived in small groups organized around mutually beneficial social relations, with resources held in common as social property. Social equality and voluntary divisions of labor endured for millennia as the basis for human communal life. With essentially social incentives, everyone who could contributed to the commonwealth for the use of all. In the long sweep of this history the emergence of dominant classes—chiefs, kings, aristocracies of birth and wealth—is a very recent event, perhaps no more than 10,000 years ago, or less, depending on which culture is considered. From time to time, small human communities organized in such communal ways continue to be 'discovered,' communities that have been spared being "civilized" by conquest at the hands of more "advanced" class societies.

A common pattern for the development of class societies, where a dominant class holds the power to exploit the labor and lives of subordinate class members, begins with the emergence of wealth as social, and communally produced surplus beyond subsistence. Often the first storable surpluses came with settlement agriculture and the emergence of production organizers, who coordinated the complexities of agriculture as a new means of production. Seizure of this social surplus provided the means for the emergence of a dominant class. The surplus provides the material means for creating a "palace guard" to enforce the relations of domination, on behalf of those who seek to institutionalize their private ownership of that stolen social surplus.

This is the pattern of the earliest coup d' etat, out of which the state and class society is institutionalized. Accompanied as it often was by male-supremacist divisions of labor, the social opportunities for free and cooperative association were shattered by a succession of forms of domination from slavery and serfdom to "free" wage labor. The most recent installment in this historical process, market capitalism, is only 500 years old in Europe and much newer elsewhere. Capitalism in Europe succeeded in wresting control from the patchwork of feudal estates and their lords. The modern capitalist nation-state was the outcome of this struggle to lay the foundations for market relations of buying, selling and owning to become the primary determinants of human life. The new system's need for primitive capital accumulation led to the conquest and colonization of most of the rest of the world over the last five centuries.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Less than 200 years ago, 80-90 percent of the U. S. labor force was self-employed. Today only about 10 percent of us can avoid going to someone else for a job, for access to the means to work. This monopoly control of the means to work, by some 2 percent of us, came about not by democratic consensus, but by the formally totalitarian structures of corporate capitalism. These structures systematically exclude the overwhelming majority of us from any significant role in economic decision-making. In the first decades of our nation, gender, race and property requirements for voting and holding office meant that only wealthy white males could vote, and then only for even wealthier white male candidates. Political parties were in competition to see who would win the right to represent the wealthy in office. The long struggle to gain the vote for all adult citizens is unfinished—migrant workers are often still disenfranchised by residency requirements. But the present political monopoly exercised by two parties equally committed to transnational corporate capitalism provides no real choice at the polling booth. Given this history, it is plausible to claim that if voting could change the system it would be illegal.

Under the not-so-tender mercies of industrial capitalist development, we were forcibly relocated by a succession of economic crises—twenty-seven depressions since the Civil War—to the growing urban centers, where more than 70 percent of us now live on 1 percent of the land in the United States. Stable human communities were shattered by this forced urbanization. Rural self-sufficiency of families and communities was replaced by the forced dependency of urban life and the social isolation of the anonymous city. Most people now depend entirely on systems of energy, food, clothing and shelter that are centralized under corporate control. As "free wage labor" the vast majority of people are "freed" of the material resources—land, tools and skills—to employ themselves. Such free people are forced to compete with one another for chances to sell their ability to work. With the increasing movement of U.S. transnational corporations to the third world's cheap labor markets, this competition between people who must work in order to live has become global, forcing them to sell their labor ever more cheaply.

Uprooting people from a direct relationship to the land, from the intimacy of extended networks of kin and community, only to thrust them by the millions into the social anonymity of contemporary urban and suburban life, has raised the level of social alienation to new heights. Our social needs, as a social species, are thwarted by conditions of life imposed on us by a tiny unrepresentative minority for the sake of their endless accumulation of wealth, along with the power to secure it.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It is when people begin to resist the dehumanizing and exploitative conditions of contemporary life that we are more often reminded of the limitations of human nature. The function of this pathological view of human nature is to discourage us from attempting to change the conditions of our lives by cooperative struggle. "After all, you can't change human nature," is a mythic claim calculated to drown in despair aspirations for significant social change.

But human nature is not the problem. Given social opportunities and the institutional structures to meet their needs by means that hurt no one else, historically, most people have chosen non-selfish alternatives. We are a social species, and social species survive by cooperation—evolutionary 'mutual aid' in Peter Kropotkin's sense. Our current problems are rooted in the forced competition required by the structure of market society, with its carefully crafted artificial scarcities of opportunity for cooperative and mutually satisfying activity. This forced competition for scarce educational, work, housing and other opportunities is the basis for dividing the majority of people against one another by sex, race, age and ability. A ruling minority depends on a divided majority for its security and continued privilege.

At the same time, it is a system that both produces and selects the most socially stunted among us—least able to trust and cooperate with others—and places them in positions of power and privilege. In an Adlerian sense the desire for coercive power over others is often part of a desperate strategy for enhancing one's self-esteem. Acts of domination over others require numbing oneself to the needs of others and the repercussions of one's own acts on others. People become mere objects, in a field of objects, to be manipulated for private advantage. For those whose self-esteem is low enough, having coercive power over others is compensatory—even exhilarating. In Henry Kissinger's own words, "power is the ultimate aphrodisiac."

It is not the pathology of all human beings but the pathology of some humans that lies at the root of our current social and ecological crises. Predatory personalities among us are often in positions of control, where their pathologies are nurtured by the very structure of advanced industrial capitalist institutions. A socially concerned corporate manager who puts human interests ahead of profit maximization joins the ranks of the unemployed. It may not be strictly necessary to be a sociopath in order to be in a position of power in our society, but the rules of the game require doing a good imitation of one.

Yet other, less socially harmful strategies for self-enhancement can be found for constructively meeting the needs of those consumed with the desire for power over others. Being denied opportunities to dominate, in an otherwise supportive social environment, may allow them to come to feel better about themselves by strategies that do not require victimizing others. In any case, we need to remove them from

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the control over all our lives by whatever means are available. This is primarily an institutional issue. How are we to democratize the structures of decision-making in our political, social and economic institutions, so that everyone affected by a decision has a significant role in making it? How do we empower ourselves as a self-consciously organized majority, so we can create liberatory social relations in which the free and full development of every person depends on, and is made possible by, the free and full development of all of us?

Structurally, we have to take democratic control of what was—and is—social property, the means of production and reproduction of ourselves as a human community. The existing system of private, income-producing property embodies an institutionalized extortion, where those who control the means to work demand an unearned reward (profits, interest and rent) for granting permission to use what we as a society have already labored to create. The imperatives of capitalist development have shaped technologies for the domination of nature and of peoples, in the interest of securing and enhancing capital accumulation for the few. Conquest, colonialism and imperialism are the products of these imperatives. Technologies in the service of such institutions have had devastating consequences, far beyond those of all pre-capitalist social formations combined. No other society has had such ecocidal relations with its environment or deployed such destructive technologies around the world.

By taking democratic control of the means of production, we can redesign the character and uses of technologies to harmonize with the human needs of those who are affected by them. The nature of work can be recreated in more satisfying contexts of producing to meet human needs. It will no longer be necessary to spend more than 50 percent of every tax dollar on military spending to prop up the profit margins of major arms manufacturers. With social ownership and worker control, we can turn our surplus productive capabilities to environmental reclamation on a global scale, to restore much of what has been damaged already. By learning how to live in gentle and ecologically enduring ways in our world, we can reach toward the biospherical egalitarianism and social justice that holds the most promise for our survival as a species.

The Labor Studies Division of the Society for the Study of Social Problems is soliciting graduate student papers that draw on the legacy of Harry Braverman. One of these papers will receive the 1999 Braverman award, which consists of a $200 cash prize and recognition at the SSSP Awards Banquet. For more information, contact: Committee Chair, Heidi Gottfried, 614 Eberwhite, Ann Arbor, MI 48103, or e-mail DAVIDFL@CONCENTRIC.NET.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BOOKS

Fusing Red and Green

by Paul Burkett

James O'Connor, *Natural Causes: Essays in Ecological Marxism* (New York: Guilford, 1998), 350 pp., $19.95, paper.

One of the foremost Marxist social scientists in the United States, James O'Connor has produced many original insights into the political economy of the United States, and global capitalism. His *Fiscal Crisis of the State* (1973) revealed the structural roots of government deficit problems, and his subsequent work has focused on the development of a general theory of capitalist crisis. In *Accumulation Crisis* (1984) and *The Meaning of Crisis* (1987), he surveyed and synthesized alternative viewpoints on the economic, political, cultural and psychological crisis tendencies of late-twentieth century capitalism. Since 1988, when he co-founded the innovative "eco-Marxist" quarterly *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism*, O'Connor has expanded his vision of capitalist crisis and socialist movements to incorporate natural conditions more fully. *Natural Causes* gathers together O'Connor's major writings over this last period, providing an excellent opportunity to assess his considerable contribution to eco-Marxist theory and practice.

O'Connor's eco-Marxism centers on "what is arguably *the* basic contradiction of world capitalism at the end of the 20th century," that between the multiplication of "environmental and social problems" on the one hand, and the breakdown of "older forms of political, economic, and social regulation of capital" on the other. Capital has always had a tendency to plunder and vitiate the human,

Paul Burkett teaches in the Department of Economics at Indiana State University in Terre Haute.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

social, and natural conditions of production by treating these conditions as commodities, even though they are not produced as commodities. But these destructive tendencies have now been freed up by the weakening or dismantling of Keynesian welfare-regulator regimes in the West, "real socialism" in the East, and "semiautarkic models of nationalist socioeconomic development and regulation" in the South—all of which have been displaced by neoliberal "free market" regimes, which place fewer social restraints on profit-driven production, trade, and finance. Worker and community struggles have been stimulated by, and in some cases contributed to, the breakdown of the old refutatory system; but these struggles have remained mostly "populist" and "localist," and thus incapable of countering capital's increasingly broad and deep exploitation of natural and social wealth. O'Connor's aim is to assist the development of a broader, but still richly diverse "radical green and green radical politics." Such politics must meld together ecological, social, and labor concerns, thereby providing a viable alternative to "*both* global capital/neoliberalism *and* the many forms of styles of localism" current among the "new social movements—especially environmental and ecological movements."

This eco-Marxist project requires good theory based on a sound *method* of analysis. Accordingly, Part I of *Natural Causes* records O'Connor's own "search for a method." He suggests that the traditional materialist conception of history "may be strengthened by incorporating both natural and cultural 'environmental' factors" more fully. By placing explicit emphasis on the natural and social conditions of production, O'Connor hopes to produce "a method of study that is at once theoretically sound (more or less) and also practically useful in radical environmental politics." Besides, in order for "Marxism to be true to itself" as materialism, it "must become ecological." Surprisingly, O'Connor does not systematically address the extent to which Marxism's historical neglect of the conditions of production is rooted in partial and/or distorted interpretations of the work of Marx and Engels. Instead, *Natural Causes* merely recites the standard accusations of ecologically incorrect thinking against the founders of Marxism, with no real consideration of the evidence for and against these charges or of alternative interpretations, in which Marx and Engels assign a central role to natural conditions and ecological themes.[1] The fact that O'Connor never really comes to grips with the legacy and resources of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

classical Marxism may help account for certain problems with his analysis of capitalist environmental crisis, as described later.

O'Connor's method is, in any case, explicitly anticapitalist. He shows how capitalism reduces nature's value to its usefulness as an immediate condition of the production of goods and services by human labor. This instrumental valuation of nature goes hand in hand with a series of mechanistic and dualistic attitudes also traceable to capitalism. Nature is treated as an aggregate of separate "things" (utilities) rather than as a total functioning and evolving system. As a result, "external nature and human nature" are falsely separated, just as "human nature [is] separated into mind and body, mind and feelings, thought and emotion." Meanwhile "the social nature of human beings [is] also divided or separated," and society is defined merely as an aggregate of individuals. For O'Connor, individualistic ways of thinking about society and instrumental ways of thinking about nature are two sides of the same coin: both are rooted in capitalism's basic wage-labor and market relations. An effective struggle against these ideologies must question the treatment of human beings, and their natural and social conditions as instruments of commodity production for profit. O'Connor's method is thus profoundly anti-economistic not just because it is interdisciplinary, but also because it consciously struggles to escape the dominant conception of what it means for people to "use" nature and society. His eco-Marxism strives for a more holistic and coevolutionary perspective on people, society, and nature, informed by Marxist class analysis.

Part II of *Natural Causes* applies O'Connor's eco-Marxist method to "the way that capitalist production relationships ... degrade or destroy the conditions of production." The analysis is developed "mainly from the vantage point of crisis theory," extended to consider the environmental sustainablility of capitalism. For O'Connor, this more general crisis theory must "focus on the use value as well as the exchange value side of things," while recognizing "the external physical and social barriers to capitalist accumulation as well as the internal economic barriers."

Capitalism requires material and social conditions under which exploitable labor power can be reproduced—conditions suitable to the profitable investment of capital. It also presumes that revolts by "those whose ways of life are being subverted by capitalism" remain within manageable bounds. According to O'Connor, "the short answer to the question 'Is sustainable capitalism possible?' is 'No,'

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

while a longer answer is 'Probably not.'" For one thing, "the evidence" of this system's vast environmental plunder and ecological degradation "favors the judgement that capitalism is not ecologically sustainable." There is also a growing "disjuncture or gap" between mainstream environmentalist and capitalist perspectives on the environment. "For reformist Greens, the problem is how to remake capital in ways consistent with the sustainability of nature." Corporate capital, by contrast, reduces the environmental question to short-run economic motivations (e.g., "how to present a plausibly green image to consumers and the public," and how to "save energy and raw materials"), plus the long-run goal of "remak[ing] nature in ways that are consistent with sustainable profitability and capital accumulation." Both sides evade "the contradiction between self-expanding capital and self-limiting nature." Since "a positive rate of profit means growth of total product ... sustainable capitalism must of necessity be an expanding capitalism"; but this contradicts the limited character of natural conditions, at least for any given quality of these conditions.

For capitalism to be sustainable, the conditions of production must "be available at the right time and right place and in the right quantities and right qualities." O'Connor is skeptical about the ability of market-oriented environmental policies (so-called green taxes and subsidies, tradeable pollution rights, etc.) to resolve this problem. Whether *de facto* or *de jure*, "the capitalization of the conditions of production in general, and nature in particular, tends to raise the cost of capital and reduce its flexibility." Given the corrosive effects of capitalist production on the productivity of natural and social conditions, "huge sums of money would have to be expended to restructure production conditions in ways that restored or increased their 'productivity' and thus lower the costs of capitalism." Such a project seems unlikely, given the absence of any "state agency, or corporate-type planning agency ... that engages in overall ecological, urban, and social planning."

Capitalism's degradation of natural and social conditions gives new meaning to anticapitalist struggles. Part III of *Natural Causes* thus chronicles O'Connor's "search for (and evaluation of) radical tendencies within the ecology and related movements." Among the movements he considers are NGOs and the "environmentalism of the poor" in the South, and the environmental justice and toxic waste movements in the North. O'Connor explores the potential of these movements for fusing ecological and social sustainability con-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cerns with the traditional "bread and butter" concerns of organized labor. One basis for such a fusion is the underlying "unity of social labor," including socially useful, non-commodity producing labor. This unity is neglected by many "post-Marxist" leftists whose one-sided focus on "differences and particularities" within and across social and ecological movements leads them to interpret these movements as "non-class." Neither do post-Marxists adequately consider why it is that "most problems of the natural and social environment are bigger problems from the standpoint of the poor, especially oppressed minorities, than for the salaried and the well-to-do."

O' Connor believes that "a partnership between labor and new social movements not only can, but must, be made to work." Despite the absolute differences in worker-community conditions in the developed North and the underdeveloped South, "the 'ecologism of affluence' and the 'ecologism of survival' ... are in some ways intersecting in both North and South." While Northern struggles increasingly address nature as a basic condition of human production and reproduction (prefiguring a fusion of sustainability, environmental justice, and labor concerns), industrialization and the proliferation of reserve armies of surplus labor have produced a qualitatively similar intersection of concern in the South (albeit with a stronger orientation towards issues of immediate survival). The potential thus exists for the development of a popular and global Red-Green alternative to the capitalization of natural and social conditions, especially given the planetary scope of capitalism's environmental impact and the "political vacuum" created by the demise of prior forms of national capitalist regulation.

At times, however, O'Connor's fusion of Red and Green is hampered by the artificial lines he draws between capital's exploitation of labor and capital's destructive use of natural and social conditions. This problem becomes clear when O'Connor argues that capitalism now suffers from *two* basic contradictions, which together explain why "capital and the state today" are "totally confused as the new form of regulation which might provide a coherent framework for capital accumulation."

The first contradiction involves the danger of over-production crises due to over-exploitation of labor. When "capital exercises [too] much power over labor," wage-based demand shrinks relative to the total value of commodities produced, making it difficult for capital to realize the surplus value contained in these commodities. This over-accumulation tendency manifests itself in the "vast credit

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

structure, aggressive marketing, constant product innovation, and intensified competition" undertaken by capital to cope with the growing "risk of a realization crisis," Capitalism's second contradiction is between capital and the conditions of production. As noted earlier, O'Connor argues that this second contradiction reduces the profitability of capital by increasing the costs of production. When individual firms "defend or restore profits by strategies that degrade or fail to maintain over time the material and social conditions of their own production," the "unintended effect is to raise costs on to the capitals (and, at the limit, capital as a whole), thereby lowering produced profits." Profits are further reduced when "social movements demand that capital better provide for the maintenance and restoration" of natural and social conditions, e.g., "when they demand better health care, protest the ruination of soils, and defend urban neighborhoods in ways that increase capital costs or reduce capital flexibility."

O'Connor's "two contradictions" framework is pleasing insofar as it explains why neither Keynesian demand-side policies nor neoliberal supply- or cost-side policies can overcome the contradictions of capital accumulation. The problem, however, is that O'Connor artificially divides the first contradiction from the second, even asserting that the "first contradiction ... has nothing to do with the *conditions* of production, whether these are interpreted economically or in socio-political terms." Since the first contradiction "expresses capital's social and political power over labor," it is difficult to see how it can be separated from the conditions of production. As we know from Marx, capital's power over labor and increases in the rate of exploitation (especially through increases in labor productivity which reduce the value of labor power itself) are both firmly rooted in capital's appropriation of natural and social conditions and the conversion of these conditions into means of exploiting labor power and objectifying surplus labor in vendible use values. As O'Connor himself notes, this situation presumes a "process of original accumulation" in which the direct producers are "freed ... from their land and other means of production." The social separation of labor power from necessary conditions of production is thus central to capital's power over labor, capital's explicative and destructive combination of nature and labor in production, and over-accumulation problems. O'Connor's sharp line between the first and second contradictions unwittingly reproduces this separation by artificially dividing the "internal" and "external" barriers to capital

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

accumulation, and this weakens his fusion of Red and Green perspectives on capitalist crisis and social movements.

As for the "second contradiction," it is by no means clear that rising "external costs" from capital's use of natural and social conditions need translate into profitability problems for capital as a whole. All capital accumulation requires is exploitable labor power and material conditions conducive to extraction of surplus labor and its objectification in marketable use values. The qualitative nature of the production conditions, labor power, and produced use values is historically contingent. Pollution control and waste disposal, prisons (with exploitation of imprisoned labor power), and police and security services, are all quite profitable sectors, even though they represent private costs and/or tax bills from the standpoint of many individual enterprises. The fact is that the "external costs" of capital accumulation create profitable opportunities for the production and realization of surplus value not only for individual enterprises, but for capital as a whole—with or without a "corporate-type planning agency" to coordinate and distribute these opportunities. On the one hand, capital responds to its over-accumulation problems by developing and marketing new products featuring ecologically and socially destructive use values (plastic packaging, fast foods, the automobile, pesticides,). On the other hand, capital accumulation increasingly takes the form of goods and services whose necessity or usefulness stems from the "external costs" of capitalist production and consumption. The whole automobile/petroleum/real estate complex, for example, feeds off of capitalism's "negative externalities" as much as it helps generate them; the same can be said of the medical and legal industries. The pollution control and waste treatment industry, with annual sales of between $200-300 billion in 1990 (more than the entire global aerospace industry) is merely the latest member of this pantheon of externality-based activities.[2]

The profitability of such destructive and/or externality-based activities does not resolve capitalism's "first contradiction." Indeed, insofar as private enterprise naturally gravitates toward the most profitable kind of pollution control and waste management activities, the problem of over-accumulation of potential surplus value is correspondingly worsened—all the more so as these activities are increasingly monopolized by a small number of larger, relatively profitable corporations. In this respect, the environment industry does not differ from other monopoly capitalist sectors. Still, the fact that the environment industry can itself contribute to over-accumu-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lation problems shows very clearly that the real, fundamental contradiction of capitalism is the alienation of the conditions of production vis-à-vis workers and communities. O'Connor's two contradictions are both *symptoms* of this more basic contradiction.

Once the underlying unity of O'Connor's two contradictions is recognized, we can see more clearly the limits of the reformist vision of green capitalism. The environment industry is not only incapable of solving the problem of over-accumulation; it is also incapable of resolving capitalism's environmental crisis. Pollution control, waste management, and recycling may be profitable activities; but they do not directly address the tension between competitive capitalist growth and the limited character of natural conditions of any given quality.

As matters stand, the competitive "success" of the environment industry itself depends upon and contributes to the ecologically unsustainable growth of capitalist production. The fact that "environmental maintenance" is itself a "growth industry" reveals the conflict between the conditions required for capital accumulation and the conditions required for a sustainable process of human and social development. To put it bluntly, capital can in principle continue to accumulate under any natural conditions, however degraded, so long as there is not a complete extinction of human life. This makes it essential to distinguish environmental crises *of capital accumulation* from environmental crisis in the sense of *a general deterioration of the conditions for the development of people as a natural and social species.* The latter type of crisis by no means automatically implies the former, even though both are products of capitalism—which is to say that, from the standpoint of human development, capitalism is an ecologically and socially irrational system.

O'Connor does note that capital's destructive effects on the conditions of production represent "not only threats to profits and accumulation, but also to the viability of the social and natural environment as mainstays of life and life itself." He also describes ecological and social movements as struggles "to determine *what kind of use values production conditions will in fact be.*" Nonetheless, by treating the conditions of production as "external" to capital's exploitation of labor, O'Connor's "two contradictions" dichotomy tends to soften the distinction between the conditions required by capitalist production and the conditions required for human development. This is ironic given O'Connor's healthy desire to avoid economism. More importantly, the effect of this softening is to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

artificially divide labor and ecological struggles—with the latter still basically defined as "non-class" struggles. The dualism between "internal and external" capitalist contradictions thus weakens O'Connor's critique of the "post-Marxist" politics of difference and particularity.

It is difficult to inform an anticapitalist ecological perspective using a framework in which natural conditions are "external" to capital accumulation. In order to accumulate as exchange value, capital must take the form of marketable use values combining social labor and nature. As a result, current "natural" conditions are largely a product of the capitalistic appropriation of nature. It follows that any Red-Green movement must be based on subjective and objective conditions growing out of capital's exploitation of labor and nature, and the struggles engendered by this exploitation. Along with its destruction and degradation of natural conditions, capital's development of social labor creates the potential for more universal, less restricted relations between people and nature. In this sense, contemporary ecological thinking is, to a significant degree, a product of capitalist development.[3] But this knowledge can only be effectively applied insofar as capitalism's social separation of working people from necessary conditions of production is replaced by a system of democratic worker-community control over society's use of these conditions. As Engels puts it, the "regulation" of "our interference with the traditional course of nature ... requires something more than mere knowledge. It requires a complete revolution in our hitherto existing mode of production, and simultaneously a revolution in our whole contemporary social order."[4]

Engels' observation is not a prescription to sit back and "wait for the revolution." All worker and community struggles for greater popular control over production are objectively opposed to the treatment of labor and nature as mere means of capital accumulation. These struggles can work toward the de-alienation of the conditions of production required to overcome O'Connor's two contradictions and to create a healthy and sustainable coevolution of people, society, and nature. Despite the above qualifications, *Natural Causes* is a rich source of insights for anyone interested in contributing to this movement.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NOTES

1. John Bellamy Foster, "Marx and the Environment," *Monthly Review*, vol. 47, no. 3, July/August 1995, pp. 108-123; Paul Burkett, "On Some Common Misconceptions About Nature and Marx's Critique of Political Economy," *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism*, vol. 7, no. 3, Fall 1996, pp. 332-359.
2. For further details, see Joshua Karliner, "The Environment Industry: Profiting from Pollution," *The Ecologist*, vol. 24, no. 2, March/April 1994, pp. 59-63, and Claudia H. Deutsch, "Scrubbing the Air, Buffing the Cleaners: Belated E.P.A. War on Pollutants May Infuse Value into Companies," *New York Times*, October 17, 1997, pp. C1; also Martin Gellen, "The Making of a Pollution-Industrial Complex," in *Eco-Catastrophe*, Editors of *Ramparts*, ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), pp. 73-83.
3. Howard L. Parsons, *Marx and Engels on Ecology* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1977), pp. 88-89; Victor Wallis, "Socialism, Ecology, and Democracy," in *Socialism: Crisis and Renewal*, C. Polychroniu, editor (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1993), pp. 147-148.
4. Frederick Engels, *Dialectics of Nature* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964), pp. 183-184.

~

Annette T. Rubinstein writes, "I was happily surprised to see Moody's poem, 'To a Soldier Fallen in the Phillipines,' in your last issue. It reminded me of the 'Ode for the American Dead in Korea,' a more complex and profoundly political poem by the great com-muinst poet Tom McGrath. I enclose a copy herewith in hopes that you will present it to your readers."

1.
God love your now, if no one else will ever,
Corpse in the paddy, or dead on a high hill
In the fine and ruinous summer of a war
You never wanted. All your false flags were
Of bravery and ignorance, like grade school maps:
Colors of countries you would never see—
Until that weekend in eternity
When, laughing, well armed, perfectly ready to kill
The world and your brother, the safe commanders sent
You into your future. Oh, dead on a hill,
Dead in a paddy, leeched and tumbled to
A tomb of footnotes. We mourn a changeling: you:
Handselled to poverty and drummed to war
By distinguished masters whom you never knew.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

2.
The bee that spins his metal from the sun,
The shy mole drifting like a miner ghost
Through midnight earth—all happy creatures run
As strict as trains on rails the circuits of
Blind instinct. Happy in your summer follies,
You mined a culture that was mined for war:
The state to mold you, church to bless, and always
The elders to confirm you in your ignorance.
No scholar put your thinking cap on nor
Warned that in dead seas fishes died in schools
Before inventing legs to walk the land.
The rulers stuck a tennis racket in your hand,
An Ark against the flood. In time of change
Courage is not enough: the blind mole dies,
And you on your hill, who did not know the rules.

3.
Wet in the windy counties of the dawn
The lone crow skirls his draggled passage home:
And God (whose sparrows fall aslant his gaze,
Like grace or confetti) blinks and he is gone,
And you are gone. Your scarecrow valor grows
And rusts like early lilac while the rose
Blooms in Dakota and the stock exchange
Flowers. Roses, rents, all things conspire
To crown your death with wreaths of living fire.
And the public mourners come: the politic tear
Is cast in the Forum. But, in another year,
We will mourn you, whose fossil courage fills
The limestone histories: brave: ignorant: amazed:
Dead in the rice paddies, dead on the nameless hills.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(Continued from inside back cover)

wars have always known that the outcome wouldn't be outright military victory, but they have nonetheless regarded military action as a means of achieving some other, political goal, the "containment" of external enemies or of internal opposition, or even the narrower political objectives of electoral advantage through displays of "toughness."

But to say this isn't enough. Why on earth does the United States continue to embark on military actions—such as the ones against Iraq—which have little chance of achieving their avowed political purpose? How can we explain U.S. determination to go down this road apparently regardless of the consequences, and even in the face of opposition from its allies? In large part, it comes down to one theme that has run through U.S. foreign policy for a very long time. Whether the avowed political aim has been "containment" of communism or of Saddam Hussein, an overriding objective has been the naked display of imperial power for its own sake, just to show who's boss. Unless we simply dismiss it all as insanity, in the final analysis we can only say that U.S. imperial hegemony can't now rely, if it ever could, on economic superiority alone, and that it depends on periodic displays of sheer force. It hardly matters where or for what ostensible purpose, though it helps if the target is non-European or non-white.

We can't, then, reduce this latest display of imperial power to Clinton's fight against impeachment. But there are certainly other connections between these two events. In both cases, the larger context is the end of the Cold War. In the same way that the Communist "threat" has been replaced by other external enemies, domestic political conflict has also found a new form, what some call a culture war, and the forces of reaction have transferred their old anticommunism to a new internal enemy.

Some people argue that Clinton has become the main target of this new cold war because, for the Republican right, he embodies the "counterculture" of the sixties. If Clinton can inspire such hatred in his adversaries on those grounds, even though his policies on so many social and economic issues are scarcely distinguishable from theirs, this very fact speaks volumes about the displacement and degradation of political debate in the United States. The focus on so-called moral and cultural issues has, at the very least, diverted political attention away from all of the country's deepest problems. For some, this political diversion no doubt reflects real convictions, but typically, it's a simple matter of winning elections, in a contest between two parties with few real ideological differences—though if the polls are to be believed, the attractions of this party-political strategy may be wearing a bit thin.

There may be another factor, too. Eric Foner, commenting on the impeachment and the political realignment that has created the new

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Republican right, has recently pointed out (he was quoted in the *New York Times*, as we recall) that it reflects a divide not so much between North and South as between the cities of the Northeast and Midwest and the suburbs of the South and West, where the Republican right is mainly based. Well, we know that this shift coincides with a movement of capital investment from the old industrial centers of the rustbelt to the new industries of the South and West. And we also know that, especially in the South, historic grievances and old cultural traditions have been readily appropriated to the new Cold War. Now if we keep in mind one of the major functions of earlier Cold War ideologies in deflecting working-class opposition to capital, the new moral and cultural crusade, with its racist overtones, seems well adapted to play an analogous role in the newer centers of U.S. capitalism, with their low level of labor organization and a particularly powerful capitalist interest in dividing white from black and Hispanic workers.

In any case, as we follow the impeachment saga, it's hard to ignore the evidence of what, failing a better term, can be called a right-wing conspiracy. Nor can we dismiss the fact that Clinton's strongest supporters have been African Americans and other minorities. Watching the spectacle on TV was not a particularly productive or edifying way of spending time, but it did dramatically bring home the difference in the social composition of the two sides, with the ethnic, racial, and sexual diversity of one side standing in stark contrast to its monochrome adversary.

That alone, even without other considerations, makes it hard for many on the left to be indifferent to the outcome of this sorry impeachment business. At the same time, it is really a tragic testimony to the degradation of U.S. politics that minorities—and, on the whole, organized labor—feel compelled to turn to Clinton for lack of someone better. It's no less tragic that some of the more progressive political leaders—including some who in other circumstances would oppose, and have opposed, imperialist adventures—apparently out of loyalty in the impeachment battle supported Clinton's latest crime in Iraq.

WASHINGTON, D. C. AREA
FRIENDS OF MONTHLY REVIEW

The Washington, D. C. Area Friends of Monthly Review meets the evening of the third Sunday of each month, in suburban Maryland. We welcome new participants. For information call 202-234-9243.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Dissent

For over four decades *Dissent* has been a strong voice on the democratic left. The *New York Times* says that *Dissent* "ranks among the handful of political journals read most regularly by American intellectuals."

But don't take their word for it. . .or ours. Try it for yourself.

Our writers include:

Alice Amsden • *Joanne Barkan* • *Marshall Berman*
Jean Cohen • *Mitchell Cohen* • *Barbara Ehrenreich*
Susan George • *Christopher Hitchens* • *Randall Kennedy*
Meera Nanda • *George Packer* • *Frances Fox Piven*
Joel Rogers • *Alan Sokal* • *Michael Walzer*
Cornel West • *Ellen Willis* • *Joe Wood* • *and many more.*

Yes, I'd like a subscription to *Dissent*:

❑ $22 one year ❑ $15 special student rate
❑ $40 two years ❑ $7.50 single copy

❑ Check attached (drawn on U.S. currency). **Add $7 for postage outside the U.S.**
❑ Bill me ❑ VISA ❑ MasterCard

Signature _____
Card no. _____ Expiration date _____
Name _____
Address _____
City/State/ZIP _____

Return to:

Dissent, 521 Fifth Avenue, Suite 1700, New York, NY 10017 mr1298

http://www.igc.org/dissent

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

POLITICAL SCIENCE QUARTERLY

THE JOURNAL OF PUBLIC AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

PSQ is the most widely read and accessible journal of public and international affairs. Published continuously since 1886 by The Academy of Political Science, ***PSQ*** presents authoritative analyses essential to understanding today's complex world.

PSQ publishes in-depth articles on domestic and foreign affairs. Each issue contains some 35 book reviews. ***PSQ's*** editorial advisory board is composed of outstanding scholars from the nation's leading universities and think tanks.

If you haven't been reading ***PSQ***, you've missed articles, book reviews and essays by world-class scholars like...

Robert Dahl • Samuel Huntington • Robert Jervis • Walter LaFeber
Paul Peterson • Robert Reich • Arthur Schlesinger
Theda Skocpol • William Julius Wilson

" Most serious journals are narrow; most journals which are broad in scope are not serious. **PSQ** is the exception: a journal which is both broad in scope and serious in content. It is must reading for social scientists and informed citizens interested in public affairs."
SAMUEL HUNTINGTON, Harvard University

SUBSCRIBE TO ***PSQ*** BY JOINING THE ACADEMY OF POLITICAL SCIENCE.

Name _____
Address _____
City _____
State _____ Zip _____
Telephone _____

THE ACADEMY OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
475 Riverside Drive, Suite 1274
New York, NY 10115-1274
Tel (212) 870-2500 • Fax (212) 870-2202

ACADEMY MEMBERSHIP
❑ $42, 1 year ❑ $76, 2 years
❑ $27, student ❑ $100, 3 years

❑ Check enclosed.

❑ Charge my:
◇ AMEX ◇ Visa ◇ MasterCard
Outside USA add $8/year.

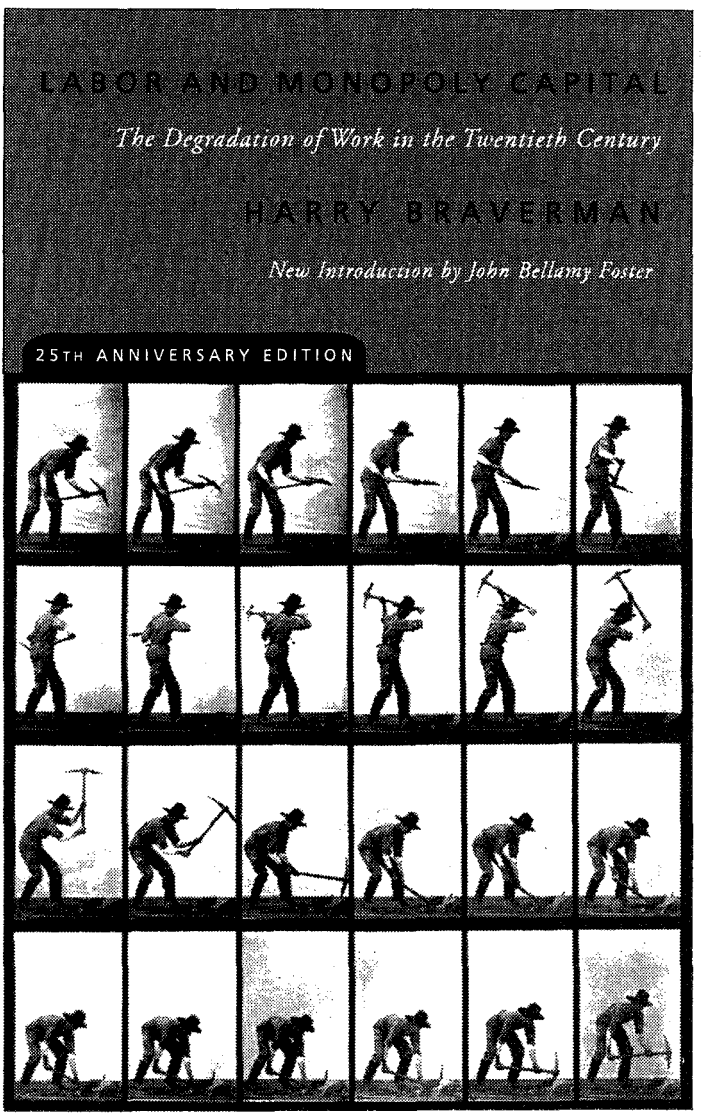
Card # _____
Exp. Date _____
Signature _____

Visit *PSQ*'s web site at http://www.epn.org/psq.html

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Monthly Review Press

NEW 25th Anniversary Edition


LABOR AND MONOPOLY CAPITAL
The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century
HARRY BRAVERMAN
New Introduction by John Bellamy Foster
25TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

February *ISBN: 0-85345-940-1 paper $19.00* *338 pp.*

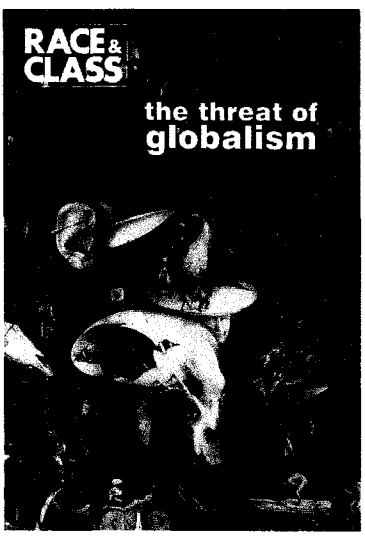
122 West 27th Street • New York, NY 10001 Tel: (212) 691-2555 • Fax: (212) 727-3676

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

£9.00
$18.00

the threat of globalism

Globalisation is fast becoming the buzzword to justify the new world economic order. But what fresh dangers does globalism present for the Third World, and how can the Left reinvent itself in the information age? This special double issue of *Race & Class* asks what is new about globalisation, have information- and bio-technologies changed economic and social relations, how does globalisation explain the rise of the prison industrial complex in the US or Hansonism in Australia? And where do we begin the resistance? Leading European, American and Third World thinkers, including John Berger, Angela Davis, Walden Bello, William Robinson and A. Sivanandan provide some answers.



ISBN 0 85001 0543 212 pages

RACE & CLASS

Available from bookshops or direct from:

Institute of Race Relations,
2–6 Leeke Street,
London WC1X 9HS,
United Kingdom.

Please make cheques or postal orders (in sterling or US dollars) payable to 'The Institute of Race Relations'.

Call **+44 (171) 837 0041** to order by credit card.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Diaspora

A Journal of Transnational Studies

Diaspora is the only journal dedicated to the study of the diasporan phenomenon. From international and interdisciplinary perspectives, it explores the traditional Armenian, Greek, and Jewish diasporas as well as new polities ranging from the African-American and Ukranian-Canadian to the Chinese-American, the Québécois, and the Palestinian. The journal provides a vital forum for the debate on increasingly flexible terms such as 'diaspora,' 'nation,' and 'transnationalism.'

Recent Articles

"Is This My Mother's Grave?": Genocide and Diaspora in Atom Egoyan's Family Viewing
Lisa Siraganian

Nationalism and Immigration in the United States
Ali Behdad

Mediterranean Topographies before Balkanization: On Greek Emporion, Revolution, and Diaspora
Artemis Leontis

A Family Affair: Migration, Dispersal, and the Emergent Identity of the Chinese Cosmopolitan
Kwok Bun Chan

Chinese Diaspora Entrepreneurship, Development, and the World Capitalist System
Paul J. Bolt

Homes and Postcoloniality
Aparajita Sagar

Diaspora on the web!
www.utpress.utoronto.ca/journal/diaspora.htm

Annual Individual Subscriptions $29
For more information or to order your subscription, please

UTP

The University of Toronto Press - Journals Division
5201 Dufferin Street North York, Ontario M3H 5T8
Tel: (416) 667-7810 Fax: (416) 667-7881
Toll Free Fax: (800) 221-9985
email: journals@utpress.utoronto.ca

Visit our web site! www.utpress.utoronto.ca/journal/home.htm

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(Continued from inside front cover)

too late," wrote a major right-wing columnist about the bombing), and it's hard to imagine a Republican President, especially one in the mold of today's Republican right, being more reluctant to kill Iraqi civilians.

That's why it's pointless to speculate about Clinton's personal motives for launching this attack. No one can rule out the possibility that the timing was determined by the impeachment proceedings, but to focus on that possibility trivializes the issue. It's not as if Clinton's actions are idiosyncratic or in any way inconsistent with policies pursued by previous U.S. administrations, without the same personal incentives. If we want to understand what this is all about, we won't get anywhere just by ascribing it to the travails of William Jefferson Clinton.

At the same time, U.S. policy in Iraq, now and before, on the face of it seems pretty close to insane. Let's, for the sake of argument, look at it on its own terms for a minute. Few serious analysts, even many who have no principled objection to U.S. imperialism, believe that actions of this kind will succeed in their avowed purposes, and a great many have questioned the effectiveness of sanctions, which have caused untold damage to innocent civilians but have had no discernible effect on Saddam's power.

Let's assume, then—and it's probably true—that getting rid of Saddam has never been the objective. Even the "Desert Storm" unleashed by George Bush, a far more devastating war than Clinton's "Desert Fox" (what bright spark dreamed that one up, by the way? Naming their attack after a Nazi general??), left him in place. It almost certainly was meant to do so, on the calculation that any likely outcome of his removal—the possible break-up of Iraq, the destabilization of the Gulf, the strengthening of Shi'ite forces against the minority Sunni elite—would be worse for U.S. interests than the devil they know (the devil they effectively created in the first place). But the effect of U.S. policies is more likely to be the strengthening of Islamic "fundamentalism," as people in the region turn to the one force most consistently opposed to U.S. imperialism.

So, what U.S. interests *are* being served? Some analysts say that sections of capital don't want Iraqi oil production to drive prices down even further, at a time when the Asian and Russian crises have battered Western commodity producers. But this somehow doesn't quite make it as an explanation for the more or less consistent pattern of U.S. policy in the Gulf, and especially for these horrendous displays of military force.

There's nothing new, of course, about the use of military force by the United States to achieve not military but political objectives. It has often been said that the objectives of all imperialist wars waged by the United States since the end of the Second World War, from Korea to the Gulf, have been more political than military. The perpetrators of these

(Continued on page 58)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

©Jim West

Which way for labor in the 21st century?

new

WHY UNIONS MATTER

by Michael D. Yates

"When people asked me for a good, basic introduction to the labor movement, I used to draw a blank. Well, here it is at last. WHY UNIONS MATTER is a comprehensive, readable introduction to the history, structure, functioning, and yes, the problems of U.S. unions. For labor and political activists just coming on the scene or veterans looking for that missing overview, this is the place to start."

—KIM MOODY, author of *Workers in a Lean World*

$17.00/paper
$44.00 cloth/192pp.

new

A NEW LABOR MOVEMENT FOR THE NEW CENTURY

edited by Gregory Mantsios
Afterword by John J. Sweeney

"This spirited collection is indispensable reading for anyone who wants to know what it will take for unions to inspire and mobilize a mass movement that will transform our nation, deepen our commitment to justice and democracy, and promote the inclusiveness that is key both to the labor movement and sustained economic growth."

—Rev. JESSE L. JACKSON, Sr.
President, Rainbow/
PUSH Coalition

$24.00/paper/400pp.

new

25th Anniversary Edition
LABOR AND MONOPOLY CAPITAL: THE DEGRADATION OF WORK IN THE 20th CENTURY
by Harry Braverman
$19.00/paper/504 pp.

forthcoming

RISING FROM THE ASHES: LABOR IN THE AGE OF "GLOBAL" CAPITALISM
edited by
Ellen Meiksins Wood,
Peter Meiksins, and
Michael D. Yates
$17.00/paper/256pp.

A FIND THE ANSWER HERE.

02>
7 42055 79772 5

Monthly Review Press To order call: 1-800-670-9499

T: (212) 691-2555 • 122 West 27th Street • New York, NY 10001

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED